

EXETER COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

CORPORATION BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 8 December 2023 held in the Boardroom, The Tower Building, Hele Road, Exeter

Present	Glenn Woodcock John Laramy Graham Atkins Sue Clarke Laura Eggins Neil Hitchings Rob Hutchins Carol McCormack Stewart Noakes Ayomide Okesola Vicki Roberts Cynthia Sedgman Patrick Tigwell Steve Wiltshire Sally Wolkowski	Corporation Vice Chair Principal/CEO
Observers	Fiona Chalk	Governance4FE
Apologies	Tim Quine Pamela DeGregorio Bindu Arjoon Lindsay Skinner	
In Attendance	Rob Bosworth Jade Otty <i>Item 5.3 only</i> Lucinda Sanders <i>Item 5.3 only</i> Katie Wilde <i>Item 5.3 only</i> Dave O'Connor <i>From item 5.3</i> John Dowell Alison Layton-Hill	Deputy Principal/CEO Vice Principal Director or Adult and HE Head of Media and Performing Arts Head of Construction and the Built Environment Executive Director of Finance Head of Governance

1. **Welcome and Apologies** **Action**

The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting and extended a particular welcome to Fiona Chalk who was observing the meeting as part of the external review of governance. The Chair also warmly welcomed Stephen Wiltshire, Managing Director of Exeter Airport to his first Board meeting. Apologies were received from Lindsay Skinner, Bindu Arjoon and Pamela DeGregorio. Tim Quine was not in attendance.

Declarations of Interest

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

Carol McCormack, Partner Michelmores, declared an interest in any items relating to Michelmores.

John Laramy, Principal/CEO declared an interest in any items relating to Pearson and as a Director anything related to Exeter College Services Ltd.

There were no other interests declared related to the agenda.

2. Minutes of Meetings

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2023, as circulated, were agreed.

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3. Matters Arising

3.1 Quality and Resources Review (QRR) feedback
Rob Hutchins had attended two QRR sessions and explained the quality assurance process to the Board. There had been a good level of data which supported an open, transparent and challenging process along with the appropriate level of support from the leadership team.

4. Corporation Chair's Report

The Chair thanked governors for attending the annual College Festival of Carols held at Exeter Cathedral. Laura Eggins, student governor was congratulated on her excellent reading. Governors were pleased to note the significant diversity in terms of the varied range of learners' talents.

Laura and Ayo had attended the Festival of Student Governance in Birmingham and shared their experience with the Board. They had welcomed the opportunity to network and collaborate with other student governors. Ayo had created a WhatsApp group for attendees, which had enabled further meaningful discussion among student governors nationally and Laura reported that the event was helpful in providing information in an accessible format. They were both appreciative of the support they receive from Exeter College as student governors.

The Board congratulated Vicki Roberts, staff governor on her promotion to Exams Manager.

The Chair thanked Rob, Cynthia and Sally for taking on the role of lead governors for the development of the strategic plan.

The Board was pleased to note that construction work on the Centre for Law and Social Sciences (block B) and at Flowerpots would be commencing during 2024. The Chair thanked the Executive for their resilience and determination in meeting the exacting standards of governors, especially related to protecting the financial interests of the College.

The Chair encouraged governors to introduce themselves to members of the Learner Leadership Team, Fiona and Stephen over lunch.

5. **Strategic Matters for Discussion**

5.1 Principal's Strategic Report

This item was dealt with as a confidential item and recorded in the confidential minutes

5.2 Self-Assessment Report 2022/2023 (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan 2023/2024 (QIP)

The Board received a presentation from the Vice Principal and noted that all achievement rates across the College were above the national average. The College had assessed itself as 'outstanding' in all curriculum areas except for high needs, which was assessed as 'good', although significant improvement had been made. There had been a debate at the Quality and Standards Committee related to the judgements for high needs and apprenticeships and the rationale for the finalised proposals were explained.

Apprenticeships was acknowledged as a particular challenge nationally. The College apprenticeship outcomes were well above the national average and had been judged as outstanding by Ofsted in the 2022 inspection. Governors were supportive of the College's aspiration of 75% by 2025.

Governors were reminded that Ofsted had graded high needs as 'good' with a recommendation to further personalise the bespoke curriculum. The provision at the Hub for Independent Living and Learning (HILL) was explained to governors and the improvements were reassuring.

The Vice Principal Performance gave an overview of the areas for improvement that were identified in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2023/2024.

The Board sought clarification as to the reason why apprentices might not be completing end point assessments. This was mainly due to apprentices securing alternative employment before completing the apprenticeship programme.

The Board questioned and received assurance that the College was confident that staff recruitment and infrastructure development will support the expansion plans for the HILL. The Special Education Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDSCO) and team are effective and know the learners well.

The Board agreed to approve the SAR 2022/2023 and QIP 2023/2024

5.3

Strategic Plan

Lucinda Sanders, Katie Wilde and Dave O'Connor joined the meeting and explained the progress to date with the development of the new strategic plan. Consultation and collaboration with students, staff and other stakeholders would be key to ensure ownership.

Governors requested a timeline to incorporate the Board's touchpoints and to demonstrate that the strategic plan is aligned to the master plan and financial plan.

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The Board debated the potential mission statements including clarifying the interpretation and how aspirational statements could be measured. The challenge of multiple audiences, their requirements and the different contexts they operate in was acknowledged. Governors encouraged the College to personalise the mission statement to Exeter College and that a working draft could be agreed but subsequently adjusted as consultation continued. The lead governors would continue to work with staff and the Board would receive an update at the next meeting.

The Board noted the presentation

6.

Learner and Student Voice update

6.1

College News

The report was received and taken as read. Governors enquired whether students invited to Oxbridge interviews were supported in that process, which was confirmed. Governors also sought assurance that disadvantaged learners were among those learners attending Oxbridge interviews.

The Board noted the report

6.2

Learner and Student Voice Report

The report was received and taken as read. The Principal/CEO highlighted the recent Learner Voice Conference and was pleased to note that the quality of teaching was appreciated by learners. Space continues to be an issue, however governors were aware that this is being addressed.

Governors raised that learners at the HILL may struggle to attend the Learner Voice Conference and asked how the College extends beyond this forum to hear the learner voice. It was confirmed that high needs learners at the HILL do attend the conference and are confident to share their views. However, it was accepted that more thought could be given to how the College inducts and hears the voice of ESOL learners.

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The Board enquired how the HE learner voice is heard. It was advised that there are programme committee meetings for each subject and learners are invited to participate.

The Board noted the report

- 6.3 Student Governor Report
The Board received the positive student governor reports and thanked the student governors for taking the time to share their experiences.

The Board noted the report

Part 2 REPORTS FOR NOTING/APPROVAL

7. Recommendations from Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- 7.1 Executive Summary from Committee Meeting on 20 November 2023.
The report summarising the key issues considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 20 November 2023 was received.

The Committee had received two presentations of assurance relating to R2.62 failure to control and delivery capital and revenue projects and R2.16 failure to detect fraud.

- 7.2 Risk Register
The Committee had received and scrutinised the risk register and recommended it to the Board for approval. Governors questioned what action is taken when a risk remains designated as high over time and it was advised that the Committee is developing an assurance map to gain additional reassurance.

The Board approved the Risk Register

- 7.3 Risk Management Annual Report
The Board considered the Risk Management Annual Report which summarised the College's activities relating to risk management for the preceding year.

The Board approved the Risk Management Annual Report

- 7.4 Key Issues Discussion Document
The Board considered the Key Issues Discussion Document which confirmed a clean audit, there were no concerns over regularity and the auditors were comfortable to give an unqualified opinion. Assumptions made were appropriate and the Financial Statements represented an accurate view of the College's strong financial position.

The Board expressed its thanks to Kate Barczok and the finance team for their efforts in ensuring a clean audit.

The Board approved the Key Issues Discussion Document

- 7.5 Regularity Self-Assessment

The Board considered the Regularity Self-Assessment which had been reviewed by the Committee.

The Board approved the Regularity Self-Assessments

- 7.6 Letters of Representation
The Auditors require the Board to confirm its understanding of its responsibilities by agreeing that the Letters of Representation may be signed before the accounts are finalised.

The Board approved the Letters of Representation for signature by the Chair for Exeter College, Exeter College Services Ltd and Exeter College Apprentices Ltd

- 7.7 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report
The Board considered the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report which assured the Board that the Committee is satisfied with the adequacy and effectiveness of the College's systems of internal control.

The Board approved the Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report

8. Recommendations from Business Services Committee

- 8.1 Executive Summary from Committee Meeting on 27 November 2023.
The report summarising the key issues considered by the Business Services Committee meeting held on 27 November 2023 was received.

The Committee had received the September 2023 management accounts for the College which indicated a positive start to the new financial year. The positive recruitment resulting in an increase in student numbers was noted. The Committee Chair extended his thanks to Carol and Graham for their contribution to the masterplan working group and confirmed that following challenge, the Committee had agreed to appoint a main contractor on a two stage contract for the Flowerpots development.

- 8.2 Exeter College Financial Statements and Going Concern
The draft accounts for Exeter College for the year ended 31 July 2023, which had been reviewed by the Business Services Committee and recommended for approval, were received. It was reiterated that the audit had proceeded smoothly. Governors were advised that one KPI related to EBITDA had not been met due to the growth in student numbers and the implications of lag funding.

This item was further discussed as a confidential item and recorded in the confidential minutes.

The Board approved the Exeter College Financial Statements and authorised the Chair and Principal to sign them

- 8.3 A Plus Training (SW) Ltd, Exeter College Apprentices Ltd and Exeter College Services Ltd (including letter of support) Financial Statements

The Board received the draft accounts for the College's subsidiary companies for the year ended 31 July 2023, which had been reviewed by the Business Services Committee and were recommended for approval. It was noted that A Plus Training (SW) Ltd and Exeter College Apprenticeship Ltd were dormant companies.

This item was further discussed as a confidential item and recorded in the confidential minutes.

The Board approved the A Plus Training (SW) Ltd, Exeter College Apprentices Ltd and Exeter College Services Ltd Financial Statements

- 9. Recommendations from Quality and Standards Committee
- 9.1 Executive Summary from Committee Meeting on 4 December 2023.
The report summarising the key issues considered by the Quality and Standards Committee meeting held on 4 December 2023 was received.

The Committee Chair had visited the HILL and had been impressed with the staff, students and the progress that had been made since its opening. The Committee had received the positive student induction survey outcomes report which echoed feedback from the student governors. The two-day induction had been particularly well received to support learners settle into College life.

- 9.2 Safeguarding Annual Report
The Committee had received the safeguarding annual report which highlighted the range and sensitivity of issues that College staff deal with. The safeguarding team will be receiving additional resource to ensure the needs of learners are met.

The Board approved the Safeguarding Annual Report

- 9.3 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
The Committee had received the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy which had been updated with minor amendments, most relating to compliance with monitoring and filtering. The College expects to be fully compliant by January 2024.

The Board approved the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

- 9.4 SAR 2022/2023 and QIP 2023/2024
The Committee had received the SAR 2022/2023 and QIP 2023/2024 earlier in the meeting. The Committee Chair commended Jade and Lucinda (HE SAR and QIP) for their expertise in collating incredibly complex data and translating it into coherent and clear information for governors.
- 9.5 HE SAR 2022/2023 and QIP 2023/2024

The Committee had received the HE SAR 2022/2023 and QIP 2023/2024. Governors were pleased with how the area of HE had improved and had become a strength of the College.

The Board approved the HE SAR 2022/2023 and QIP 2023/2024

- 9.6 Meeting the Skills Need
The Committee had received a paper and explanation as to how a new employer group had been set up to support the College in terms of its green skills ambitions.

The Chair extended his thanks to the Committee Chairs for the role they undertake in support of the College.

PART 3: REPORTS AND MINUTES FOR INFORMATION

10. **Reports**
The following reports were **received and noted**.
- 10.1 Opportunities and Development Risk Register
 - 10.2 ESFA Financial Health letter
 - 10.3 Safeguarding Annual Report
 - 10.4 Student Induction Survey outcomes
 - 10.5 Advanced British Standard – letter from Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
 - 10.6 Governance/Sealing Report
11. **Dates of scheduled meetings for 2023/2024**
Friday 19 April 2024
Friday 5 July 2024

Signed by the Chair: 

Date: 19th April 2024