

EXETER COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

CORPORATION BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 18 October 2024 at the Science Park, 6 Babbage Way, Clyst Honiton, Exeter, EX5 2FN

Present

Bindu Arjoon	Chair
Patrick Tigwell	Vice Chair
John Laramy	Principal/CEO
Graham Atkins	
Sue Clarke	
Pamela Degregorio	
Antony Hart	
Neil Hitchings	
Rob Hitchings	
Carol McCormack	
Stewart Noakes	
Damion Norcombe	
Victoria Roberts	
Lindsay Skinner	
Cynthia Sedgman	

Apologies

Graham Atkins
Tim Quine
Stephen Wiltshire
Sally Wolkowski

In Attendance

	Jade Otty	Deputy CEO
	Richard Church	Chief Operating Officer
Item 5.3	Gemma Noble	Executive Director of People and Organisational Development
	John Dowell	Executive Director of Finance
Item 5.4	Mike Blakeley	Executive Director of Partnerships and Apprenticeships
	Sam Hillman	Assistant Principal
	Alison Layton-Hill	Head of Governance
	Abbie Sawyer	Minutes

Action

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed colleagues to the first Board Meeting of the academic year.

The Chair welcomed Jess Adams, FE Student Governor, who is currently studying Politics, Sociology and Law. A warm welcome was extended to Richard Church, who has returned, now in the

role of Chief Operating Officer. Sam Hillman will also attend Board Meetings going forward, as her role expands to support Jade Otty.

Abbie Sawyer will be taking the minutes of the meeting, as the College builds resilience into the Governance Team.

Apologies were noted from Stephen Wiltshire, Graham Atkins, Tim Quine and Sally Wolkowski.

Declarations of Interest

Bindu Arjoon, CEO, Exeter City Council declared an interest in any items relating to the City Council and as a Director anything related to Exeter College Services Ltd

John Laramy, Principal/CEO, as a Director declared an interest anything related to Exeter College Services Ltd.

2. Minutes of Meetings

- 2.1 The open minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2024, as circulated, were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting.
- 2.2 The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2024, as circulated, were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that did not appear elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Corporation Chair's Report

The meeting marks the beginning of the Chair's last year as Governor and Chair. There has been much discussion about a selection process for a new Chair and the importance of the role of Chair was recognized. It had been agreed to advertise externally to reflect the Board's desire to be open and transparent. It was hoped that current Governors consider applying for the position, there have been some expressions of interest. The Chair asked the Board to encourage anyone suitable from within their networks to express an interest.

There is no specific item relating to the Strategic Plan on the agenda, however there are three governors representing the Board who are involved in the process, and a final draft will be available for December's Board Meeting.

The Chair noted excellent results, which will be discussed later in the agenda. The Chair recognised how far the Board had travelled in the last few years.

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 and recorded in the confidential minutes.

5.2 Exeter College 2024 Results

Jade Otty and Sam Hillman presented the 2023-2024 results to Board. The Board acknowledged the impressive results, most of which were well above the national average. The Board was pleased to note positive progress against those elements that required improvement the previous year, demonstrating the impact of the quality cycle. Three additional subjects had been identified for further support this academic year.

The Board was advised of some structural changes including the creation of the FLI faculty and that the ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) has been moved to PAL (Professional Adult Learning). The new Fountain Centre offers bespoke programs of study to support learners with additional needs and governors were thanked for their supporting this development.

The Board was particularly pleased with the significant improvement in Maths GCSE. It is believed that the positive change is due to a passionate team and consistent teaching.

UCAS applications were discussed and it was found that the majority of learners stay in the south west, a third of students went to a Russell Group university and 20 went to Oxbridge universities.

The Chair thanked Jade and Sam, especially for their openness and honesty with ongoing challenges.

Data lines were discussed for Pupil Premium learners. JO will identify whether attendance and engagement can be tracked on CIS for this group.

JO

The Chair encouraged governors, with the Committee Chair's permission to attend the Quality and Standards Committee should they wish.

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 2023 to 31 August 2024, and an oral overview of the key themes.

Governors noted that currently the exit questionnaire completion rate is fairly low at 30%, however Ben Arnold (Head of People Operations) has completed a piece of work to overhaul the questions in the exit questionnaire, which will hopefully improve the response rate.

The results from the staff survey were positive; 94% of staff are proud to work at the College and 91% of staff feel that they have good job security. Governors noted the increase in the number of staff benefits available.

There had been a reduction in vacancy campaigns, however campaigns are now better worded and recruitment is becoming easier in certain areas. There are still challenges in specialist areas; IT, Digital and Data.

The College had launched the 'Becoming an ACE Leader' leadership programme and feedback had been positive.

The HR priorities this year are; responding to the Government's policy changes, pay, recruitment and retention challenges, training and a focus on menopause support. The Board discussed challenges around increased hybrid working and zero hours contracts.

Mental health and mental health sick days were discussed by the Board, the College is looking into how to best support staff. The People Team are working with line managers to help them support staff members.

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

Mike Blakeley, Executive Director of Partnerships and Apprenticeships joined the meeting for item 5.4 only

5.4 **Local Skills Improvement Fund**

The Executive Director of Partnerships and Apprenticeships was welcomed to the meeting.

The LSIP (Local Skills Improvement Partnership) derived from the White Paper 2021, aims to put local businesses at the heart of skills. This is headed up in each area by the chambers of commerce. The LSIF was set up to support the LSIP and the College has worked closely with Devon and Somerset Chambers.

The College had been awarded funds for three projects; VR & Digital in HCP, Green Skills in Construction and an Advanced Engineering lab at EAA.

A copy of the presentation is to be shared with Governors.

MB

The Board thanked the Executive Director of Partnerships and Apprenticeships.

6. Learner and Student Voice update

6.1 College News

The report was received and taken as read.

6.2 Learner and Student Voice Report

The report was received and taken as read.

The Board noted the report

Part 2 REPORTS FOR NOTING/APPROVAL

7. Recommendations from Business Service Committee

7.1 Executive Summary from Committee meeting on 23 September 2024

The report summarising the key issues considered at the Business Services Committee meeting held on 23 September 2024 was received and the Committee Chair highlighted the key issues.

7.2 Review of Financial Policies

The College's operational status is at the top of good financial health, this will reduce as the pay award is implemented, however will improve again throughout the year.

Financial regulations need amending in accordance with the new ESFA handbook. The handbook details how the College plans and manages finances and there are several detailed procedures required to be in place each year with Board approval. The Board reviewed the proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations.

The Board approved the proposed updates to the Financial Regulations, Financial Appendices and Financial Procedures.

7.3 Capital Developments update

Capital developments, in particular Flowerpots, had been a focus of the Committee, RC and Steve Strang have worked to get the project back on track and the Board was reassured.

8. Recommendations from Quality and Standards Committee

8.1 Executive Summary from Committee Meeting held on 30 September 2024

The report summarising the key issues considered by the Quality and Standards Committee meeting held on 30 September 2024 was received.

8.2 EDI Statement

The new EDI Statement was received with the intention of being more meaningful and accessible for stakeholders.

The Board unanimously agreed the EDI Statement of intent.

8.3 The Board received the updated EDI Policy and noted the changes.

The Board unanimously approved the EDI policy.

9 **Recommendations from Search and Governance Committee**

9.1 Executive Summary from Committee Meeting held on 7 October 2024

The report summarising the key issues considered by the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 7 October 2024 was received.

The Board considered the proposal related to in person and online meeting. Governors were mindful of balancing the richness of in person discussions compared to ensuring people are able to attend meetings. The following proposals were put forward.

- Board to remain in person.
- Search and Governance and Remuneration to remain in person.
- Business Services and Quality and Standards to be 50% in person and 50% online.
- Audit Committee to remain online.

The Board agreed to the proposal

9.2 Appointments

When Governors complete their final term of office, they may be offered the role of Associate of the College. This enables the College to benefit from their skills and expertise. The term of for an associate is four years. The Chair proposed that Glenn Woodcock is invited to be an associate.

The Board agreed to appoint Glenn Woodcock as an Associate subject to his willingness.

The Chair proposed the reappointment of Michael Caines and Sir Steve Smith as Patrons.

The Board unanimously agreed to reappoint Michael Caines and Sir Steve Smith as Patrons.

The Board considered appointing Ayomide Okesola (Former Student Governor) as a co-opted Governor serving on Quality and Standards Committee and attending Board meetings as an observer.

The Board agreed to appoint Ayomide Okesola as a Co-opted Governor.

The Board had received an expression of interest from Wilf Hudson who has had experience as a governor at Cornwall College for eight years. The Chair highlighted the need to think about succession planning. It was agreed to explore Wilf's interest further and bring back a proposal to the Board following the next Search and Governance Committee.

Two Governors had almost completed their first term of four years. The Board considered the re-appointment of Adele Westcott and her valued contribution was acknowledged.

The Board agreed to reappoint Adele Westcott to serve a second term of office of four years.

Rob Hutchings left the room.

The re-appointment of Rob Hutchings was considered. As Vice Chair of Audit and Risk, he was acknowledged as a key part of the Committee who adds significant value.

The Board agreed to reappoint Rob Hutchings to serve a second term of office of four years.

9.3 Governors Code of Conduct

There has been a slight update to the Governors Code of Conduct, the main changes related to reclassification, referring to managing public money and accountability agreements rather than funding agreements.

The Board approved the new Governors' Code of Conduct.

9.4 AoC Code of Good Governance Compliance

The Board received the report demonstrating compliance with the AoC Code of Good Governance.

The Board agreed the AoC Code of Governance Compliance.

9.5 External Governance Review Recommendations Progress

The Board received the recommendations progress report following the external review of governance and noted that most recommendations had been completed.

The Board noted the report

10. Recommendations for Remuneration Committee

10.1 Executive Summary from Committee Meeting held on 7 October 2024

The report summarising the key issues considered by the Remuneration Committee meeting held on 7 October 2024 was received.

The Chair proposed a slight change in timings related to senior post holder appraisals to allow the Committee to contribute to their targets.

The Board agreed for the Remuneration Committee to have more of an active role in target setting for Senior Post Holders.

10.2 **Remuneration Committee Annual Report**

The Board received the Remuneration Committee Annual report.

The Board approved the Remuneration Committee Annual Report

Part 3 REPORTS AND MINUTES FOR INFORMATION

11 **Reports**

- 11.1 Risk Register
- 11.2 Opportunities and Developments Risk Register
- 11.3 Sustainability report
- 11.4 ICT Annual report
- 11.5 EDI Annual Report and Action Plan
- 11.6 Student and Stakeholder feedback report
- 11.7 Quality Cycle
- 11.8 Governance and Sealings Report

12. Dates of future Board Meetings:

- Friday 13 December 2024
- Friday 4 April 2025
- Friday 4 July 2025