

ACTIVATE LEARNING FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION MEETING OF THE CORPORATION

Meeting date: 07 October 2021

Venue: B2, Reading Campus

PRESENT:

Sue Sturgeon (1/1)
David Goosey (1/1)

Chair of the Corporation
Vice Chair of the Corporation, appointed under
item 1
Chief Executive Officer
Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee,
appointed under item 1

Sally Dicketts (1/1)
Demot Mathias (1/1)

Pauline Odulinski (1/1)
Julia von Klorowski (1/1)
Andy Stone (1/1)
Kathy Slack (1/1)
Malcolm Wicks (1/1)
Angela Adinua (1/1)
Emma Shipp (1/1)
Ben Sims (1/1)
James Voûte (1/1)

Staff Governor, as indicated in the minutes
Appointed under item 1

N ATTENDANCE:

Steve Ball
Faith Harks

Chief Financial Officer
Senior Governance Officer (Minutes)

CLERK:

Perry Penott

Director of Governance and Clerk to the
Corporation

MINUTES

The meeting started at 16:08

MINUTE NO

ACTION

1.

Apologies for Absence and Governor Appointments

Apologies for absence were received from John Cope (0/1).

The Chair noted that, after a thorough recruitment process, the Search & Governance Committee recommended that James Voûte was appointed as an External Governor. Brief introductions were made, and the Board approved the appointment of James Voûte as an External Governor. All members were agreed.

The Chair informed the Board that Janie Edge, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, had requested sabbatical leave with immediate effect. It was recommended therefore that Demot Mathias was appointed as Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, and David Goosey appointed as Vice Chair of the Corporation. The Board approved both appointments, with immediate effect. All members were agreed.

The Chair informed the Board that it was Ben Sims' final meeting of the Corporation, and the Board thanked Ben for his longstanding commitment to Activate Learning both during his years as Staff Governor and within his role as Group Student Support Delivery Manager. Ben thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve as Staff Governor.

The Chief Executive

MINUTE
NO

ACTION

The meeting was adjourned at 1649 and reconvened at 1656

7. Finance – Budget Achievement and Beyond

The Board received the Budget 2021/22 & Beyond report, and the CFO reminded the Board of the budget deficit of £1.7m agreed at the July Corporation meeting. It was noted that the losses and disruption caused by the COVID 19 pandemic had inhibited the work to drive delivery and back office efficiency across the enlarged group after the mergers in 2019. While the Group doubled in size as a result of the mergers, student numbers had not increased as quickly as anticipated and cost efficiency was required. The Board discussed the size of classes, and whether there was an authorisation process to permit classes to run, particularly when learner numbers appeared unlikely to remain on target. The CFO assured the Board that daily meetings with Faculty Directors took place to focus on student recruitment, as well as the utilisation of resources.

The CFO advised that, since the July meeting there had been an error identified within the ESFA Disadvantage Funding allocation, which was overstated. The impact increased the cost saving required to meet the budget deficit to £2m. The CFO assured the Board that the error was a result of the complex funding system, and had been identified by our own process of review and control which remained in place to ensure the error did not recur; however it heightened the urgency for cost savings.

It was noted that there were regular discussions within the Group Executive Team around driving savings, however there had been varying approaches to implementing savings across the different faculties. The Board considered how staff members across the wider organisation were held to account for ensuring savings were made and discussed the role of the Board in cascading the message to staff about the importance of their efforts in reducing costs where possible, perhaps through requesting regular reporting to the Board.

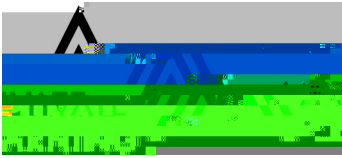
The CFO outlined the summary of cost savings required and the Board thanked the CFO for his comprehensive report and presentation.

8. CEO Report

The Board received and noted the CEO Report, and the Chief Executive Officer provided a verbal update on student numbers, noting that the numbers had increased compared to the previous year; however they had not reached the faculty set targets. Since the CEO Report had been written, it was noted that the result of the Ofsted monitoring visit had been released, which showed significant progress for the leadership and governance at 1 <

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SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Action	Responsible
Agenda item, future Corporation meeting – Deep Dive, Safeguarding	Clerk