

ACTIVATE LEARNING FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

MEETING OF THE CORPORATION

Meeting date: **10 February 2020**

Venue: **Bracknell and Wokingham College**

PRESENT:	Sally Dicketts (3/3) Chris Jones (2/3) Eve James (1/3) Nina Robinson (2/3) Malcolm Wicks (3/3) Julia Von Klonowski (2/3) Andy Stone (3/3) Sue Sturgeon (3/3) Ben Sims (3/3) John Cope (1/1) David Goosey (1/1) Emma Shipp (1/1)	Chief Executive Officer Chair of the Corporation
IN ATTENDANCE:	Steve Ball Lee Nicholls Cheri Ashby Fiona Stilwell Vronwyn Hutch	Chief Finance Officer (<i>as indicated in the minutes</i>) Deputy Chief Executive Officer (<i>as indicated in the minutes</i>) Group Executive Director, Surrey Lead (<i>as indicated in the minutes</i>) Managing Director, Activate Apprenticeships (<i>as indicated in the minutes</i>) Group Inclusion Manager (<i>as indicated in the minutes</i>)
CLERK:	Jamie Wade	Clerk to the Corporation (<i>as indicated in the minutes</i>)

MINUTES

The meeting started at 15:05.

<u>MINUTE NO.</u>		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	Appointments The Chair welcomed everyone and introduced three new governors: John Cope, David Goosey and Emma Shipp. The Chair advised that the Student Governor had resigned his position and work was underway to appoint a new student governor. The Board noted that this would be Eve James' last meeting with the Corporation, and expressed their thanks for her service.	
2.	Apologies for Absence Apologies were received from James Dipple (1/3), Tracey James (2/3), Pauline Odulinski (2/3) and Dermot Mathias (1/3).	

**MINUTE
NO.**

ACTION

3. Declarations of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality

No interests, gifts or hospitality were declared.

4. Minutes of Part I of the Meeting of 09 December 2019

The minutes of Part I of the meeting of 09 December 2019, having previously been circulated to the Board, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. **All members were agreed.**

5. Matters Arising from Part I of the Meeting of 09 December 2019

The Board noted actions against the matters arising from the meeting of 09 December 2019; the Chair advised that no response had been received from the ESFA regarding concerns raised by the Corporation about the calculation of Financial Health status.

7. Finance and Performance

Finance

The Board received the Finance Update, which was taken as read, and the CFO provided a verbal overview of the financial position.

Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

The CFO advised that, as previously agreed by the Corporation, a challenge had been issued to the ESFA regarding the calculation of financial health post-merger; although no formal response had been received, meetings were set up with key ESFA personnel to progress the matter. The CFO outlined issues arising from the new ESFA submission tool and a resulting request to extend the submission deadline. It was agreed that the submission would be based upon the Mid-Year Forecast and forecasting conducted during the merger process; it was agreed that the CFO would circulate a summary of the submission for information. **All members were agreed.**

Action: Circulate a summary of the ESFA submission to the Board

CFO

Local Government Pensions

The CFO outlined the outcomes of the triannual evaluations of the three Local Government Pension Schemes that Activate Learning was a member of, noting that the valuations presented a significant financial risk to the Corporation. The CFO advised that work was underway to challenge the assumptions and reduce costs, which could include negotiating a phased implementation and/or providing security to the Scheme(s). The Board noted that the cost had not been included in the 2019/20 Budget due to uncertainty, but had been factored into the Mid-Year Forecast. The CFO advised that the intention remained to consolidate into one Scheme, but this was unlikely to significantly reduce costs. It was agreed that the matter would be revisited from a strategic perspective at the next meeting.

Action: Agenda item, April Corporation meeting: Pensions Strategy

Clerk

Mid-Year Forecast

The CFO presented the Mid-Year Forecast, noting that it was in line with the overall 2019/20 budget, albeit with variations in the make-up of income and expenditure. The CFO briefly outlined key variances, advising that the budget contingency had been drawn upon to cover the increased pensions cost and income from The Oxford Partnership remained excluded from forecasting.

Activate Apprenticeships

The CFO advised that the Mid-Year Forecast for the Apprenticeships Division was c.£400k behind budget, and outlined the key factors contributing to the deficit. The Board noted that this was a recurring issue for the Division, and considered whether the challenges could have been anticipated earlier. The Managing

**MINUTE
NO.**

ACTION

Director of Activate Apprenticeships (MDAA) assured the Board that processes and handling of employers had been strengthened in response to external challenges. The Board noted that the sector remained variable and highly challenging, and agreed that the strategic approach to apprenticeships should be considered at the Governors' Away Day, in light of sector developments, profitability and public benefit.

Action: Agenda item, May Away Day: Apprenticeships Strategy

Clerk

KPIs

The Board received the Strategic KPI Summary, which was taken as read, and the DCEO highlighted the key risks to achieving the strategic KPIs and relevant mitigations. The Board sought and received clarification around the definition of 'meaningful employer encounters'.

A governor raised a concern over the use of the title 'Technology' for the faculty which included engineering and construction as well as IT, noting the potential for confusion with students and businesses who may interpret technology as specifically digital. The governor was assured that the name was used internally only, but would be reviewed in light of the concerns raised.

The Board briefly considered the setup of the Activate Learning website, and advised that prospective students and parents should be included in research to inform website developments.

8. Improvement Plan Progress Update

The Board received the Improvement Plan Update, which was taken as read, and the DCEO reminded members of the self-assessment and improvement plan process. The DCEO highlighted areas of good progress and areas showing less progress.

Surrey Colleges

The Group Executive Director Surrey Lead tabled an infographic detailing key progress measures for the Surrey colleges and a Quality Improvement presentation. The Group Executive Director Surrey Lead advised that an Ofsted Monitoring Visit to the Surrey colleges was anticipated in the near future, which would focus on improvements in Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The Board noted work underway to drive quality improvements and the key risks to progress in apprenticeships, English and maths, Technology and infrastructure at Merrist Wood. The Board were assured that a robust and intensive improvement plan was underway to address those risks, and thanked the Group Executive Director Surrey Lead for her work.

9. CEO Report

The Board received the CEO Report, which was taken as read.

10. Link Governor Update – Schools & Employer Engagement

Nina Robinson (NR), Link Governor for Schools and Employer Engagement, provided a verbal update to the Board, advising that she had met with the DCEO and attended a Members Meeting and Strategy Day for the Activate Learning Education Trust, and had been impressed by the enthusiasm and engagement displayed by staff and leaders. NR had met with the Group Executive Director responsible for Employer Engagement and agreed follow-up actions, although these were on hold pending changes to the Group Executive Team.

11. Use of Corporation Seal

The Board approved the application of the Corporation Seal on the Transfer of whole registered titles (TR1) and the Deed of Release. **All members were agreed.**

**MINUTE
NO.**

ACTION

12. Health & Safety Update

The Board received the Health & Safety Update, which was taken as read.

13. Safeguarding Update

The Board received the Safeguarding Update, which was taken as read.

The meeting was adjourned at 17:25 and reconvened at 17:30.

6. Apprenticeship Deep Dive

The Board received the Apprenticeship Deep Dive Report and the MDAA tabled copies of structure charts and a summary table of key performance measures. The MDAA provided a verbal overview of work undertaken since her appointment in May 2019 to restructure the Division and align quality processes with the Activate Learning Group. The MDAA advised that the Improvement Plan priorities (English and Maths, progression, and large employers) had been validated through an external Quality Deep Dive assessment. The Board noted RAG ratings arising from that process on the structure charts, and were assured that initial progress was positive and would be maintained through continued focus on the Improvement Plan, which was embedded into individual objectives.

The Board reviewed the key success measures and were advised that the projected Timely Success had been validated through the external review and was ahead of the most recently published national average, however this remained affected by legacy issues. The Board noted a significant improvement in retention and a move away from contracts which require subcontracting (in light of tightened subcontracting regulations). The Board considered decision making around employer contracts and new provision, and efficiency measures contributing to increased profitability.

The Board considered external threats to the Division, particularly policy changes and the requirement for small employers to use the Digital Apprenticeship Service; the MDAA advised that a specialist role had been created which would support employers with this Service. The Board briefly considered the option for levy payers to transfer levy funds, and were advised that the MDAA was pursuing opportunities to promote this, both with employer partners and the Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Board reiterated the importance of a strategic discussion at the Governors' Away Day, including identifying future sector growth areas.

The Board briefly considered functional skills provision and were assured that, although most Standards did not require digital skills, these were being developed through the use of Activate Learning Online. The Board noted common sector pitfalls, such as 're-badging' and the validity of apprenticeships and were assured that, through a keen focus on compliance and quality, the Division was expected to be secure.

The Board congratulated the MDAA on the progress and thanked her for her work.

13. Any Other Business

The Chair reminded members of the upcoming Governors' Away Day and invited ideas for the agenda and focus.

Action: Send any ideas for agenda items or focus points for the Governors' Away Day to the Clerk

14. Dates of Upcoming Meetings

20 April 2020

15 June 2020

11 – 12 May 2020

20 July 2020

ALL

The meeting closed at 18:10.



Chair

..... Date16 July.....

Summary of Actions

Action	Responsible
Circulate a summary of the ESFA submission to the Board	CFO
Agenda item, April Corporation meeting: Pensions Strategy	Clerk
Agenda item, May Away Day: Apprenticeships Strategy	Clerk
Send any ideas for agenda items or focus points for the Governors' Away Day to the Clerk	ALL