

Activate Learning

Further Education Corporation

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporation held on 14th October 2014, 5.30 pm in Room DG01, City of Oxford College

Present: G Blackburn (Chairman)
S Dicketts; C Holmes; E James; T James; S Medhat; J Dipple; P Odulinski; M Brankin; E Paris; T Watts; J Von Klonowski; B Grenville Jones

In attendance: S McCormick, Group Deputy CEO
R Turner, Principal Banbury and Bicester College
I Francis, Principal City of Oxford College
P Newman, Principal (interim), Reading College
L Nicholls, Executive Director Curriculum Standards and Academies
P Lloyd, CEO Activate Enterprise
N Waller (Staff Support)
K Whife, Clerk to The Corporation

1. Apologies for absence

C Jones (Governor)
M Jennings (Governor)
D Wharton (Governor)
R Bengt Karlstrom (Student Governor)

2. Declaration of interests, gifts and hospitality

None

3. Minutes, 8 July 2014

It was noted that P Odulinski and M Jennings left the meeting for item 5 and that this should be recorded in the minutes.

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 8 July 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

None

APPROVALS

5. Appointment to the Corporation (Search Committee)

The Corporation discussed the proposal to appoint Julia von Klonowski as governor to the Corporation.

The Corporation discussed the proposal to appoint the Vice Chair of the Corporation. B Grenville Jones nominated T James and C Holmes

seconded the nomination. There was a consensus to approve the appointment of T James as Vice Chair to the Corporation.

S Medhat nominated B Grenville Jones as Chair of the City of Oxford College Advisory Board

Following a recommendation from the Search Committee, T Watts was nominated as Chair of the Reading Advisory Board.

RESOLVED

To approve the appointment of Julia von Klonowski to the Corporation with effect from 14th October 2014

To approve the appointment of Tracey James as Vice Chair of the Corporation with effect from 14th October 2014

To approve the appointment of Bernard Grenville Jones as Chair of the City of Oxford College Advisory Board with effect from 14th October 2014

To approve the appointment of Terry Watts as Chair of the Reading Advisory Board with effect from 14th October 2014

6. Governance Structure for Activate Learning

In response to the proposal from S Medhat at the Transformation Working Group and the recommendation from the Search Committee, the Corporation considered the arrangements for student and staff representation that reflects the voice of students and staff across the Activate Learning group.

RESOLVED

To approve the recommendation that a Group Staff Council and a Group Student Council are established

STRATEGIC

7. Strategic Direction

The Group CEO updated the Corporation on the work of the Transformation Working Group, highlighting the work to develop and align the KPIs with the Strategic Plan 2014-2018. A key theme that emerged was the importance that the Corporation develop a strategic perspective on marketing and branding, with clear governance arrangements. It was highlighted that when looking at growth that it is important to understand risk and that time should be given to this at the next Transformational Working Group.

RESOLVED

That the working group will meet again, with a view to finalise their work at an Away Day meeting in early 2015.

8. Group CEO's Report - CONFIDENTIAL

9. Saudi Arabia – CONFIDENTIAL

10. Schools

The report on the Schools Division was outlined by the Executive Director. The Governors commended him on the structure of the report.

The Corporation were asked to resolve to continue with opening the Career (Pathway) College through direct entry arrangements rather than follow the Career College Trust route, unless a reasonable pricing agreement can be negotiated. The Corporation discussed whether the merits of the UTC brand outweigh some of the less positive elements of working with the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, who have lost some credibility with the government following the closure of Hackney UTC. It was suggested that there may be scope to work with Gazelle, who already receives some money from the Group, and receive some of the benefits offered by the Baker Dearing Trust. The Corporation endorsed the recommendation to follow direct entry arrangements.

RESOLVED

To continue with opening the Career (Pathway) College through direct entry arrangements rather than follow the Career College Trust route, unless a reasonable pricing agreement can be negotiated.

11. Activate Enterprise

The CEO Activate Enterprise (AE) summarised his paper, highlighting a focus on improving quality.

It was highlighted that approximately 90% businesses in Oxfordshire have less than 5 staff. The importance of this market was highlighted and it was suggested that there could be real potential for Activate Enterprise if they can clearly understand what training these small businesses need.

The Chairman commended the CEO Activate Enterprise on his input to the Group Executive Team.

RESOLVED

To receive the report

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

12. Activate Learning Group Finance (FE&GP)

The Deputy CEO advised the Corporation on the Group's financial position.

The Chair of the Finance, Estates and General Purposes (FE&GP) Committee advised the Corporation that there has been extensive

discussion through this Committee at their meeting on 1st October. The Committee have questioned why the Governors weren't better informed and have asked what the Group has learned from being in this position. There is some assurance that lessons are being learned and that the Group has a strong sense of responsibility to resolve the current situation. It has arisen that some contracts could have been better controlled and the Committee have recommended that the Audit and Risk Committee have some oversight of this.

The Corporation discussed the risk that a deficit continues for another year, where action could be triggered from the SFA with regards to the organisation's financial health. The Deputy CEO suggested that the Group's positive track record should reassure the SFA.

The Governors emphasised the importance of timing and asked if there were early warning signs. It was recommended that when growth forecasts are reviewed, there should be attention placed on timing. The Corporation were advised that the outturn for the year was optimistic. A Governor suggested that the margins are slender in relation to the business size. Perhaps a more positive margin is needed to cope with the unforeseen difficulties? Further to this, it was suggested that the processes may not be adequate to cope with the new business model and that managers may need to acquire more skills. The need to expand the Finance Team and bring in more qualified staff was highlighted.

RESOLVED

To receive the report for information

To include an update on the Group's Financial Position at the next meeting

13. Management Accounts to year-end (FE&GP)

The Management Accounts and year-end forecast were received by the Corporation.

RESOLVED

To receive the management accounts and the year-end forecast as recommended by FE&GP.

14. Health and Safety Annual Report

The Corporation received the Health and Safety Annual Report. There were no questions or comments.

RESOLVED

To receive the Annual Report

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

15. Review of Confidential Items

The Corporation considered those items of confidential business arising over the last year.

RESOLVED

To agree the recommendation that that those items marked be made available for public inspection.

16. Corporation and Committee Attendance Monitoring

A report was summarised, which sets out the attendance by Corporation members at meetings of each of the Corporation's committees and the Corporation in the 2013-14 year. The Chairman thanked the Governor's for their commitment and good attendance over the last year.

RESOLVED

To note the attendance figure achieved in 2013 – 2014.

To retain the existing 75% target attendance figure for committees and the 80% target for the main Corporation.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

17. Committee Minutes

The Corporation received the Committee minutes

18. Any Other Business

The Chairman of the Corporation thanked Charles Holmes for 8 years of support, for his great wisdom and his measured responses.

19. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 9th December 2015, City of Oxford College

Chairman

Date