



ACTIVATE LEARNING FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

MEETING OF THE CORPORATION

Meeting date: **01 February 2021**

Venue: **Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT:

Sue Sturgeon (3/3)	Chair of the Corporation
Dermot Mathias (3/3)	Vice Chair of the Corporation
Sally Dicketts (3/3)	Chief Executive Officer
Tracey James (3/3)	
James Dipple (3/3)	
Pauline Odulinski (3/3)	
Malcolm Wicks (3/3)	
Julia von Klonowski (3/3)	<i>As indicated in the minutes</i>
Andy Stone (3/3)	
Emma Shipp (3/3)	
David Goosey (2/3)	<i>As indicated in the minutes</i>
John Cope (3/3)	<i>As indicated in the minutes</i>
Ben Sims (3/3)	<i>As indicated in the minutes</i>
Angela Adimora (2/2)	<i>As indicated in the minutes</i>
Kathy Slack (2/2)	CEO, EM3 LEP
Jamie Edge (2/2)	<i>As indicated in the minutes</i>
Megan Henderson (2/2)	<i>As indicated in the minutes</i>

IN ATTENDANCE:

Steve Ball	Chief Finance Officer
Lee Nicholls	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Cheri Ashby	Group Executive Director
Bernard Grenville-Jones	Group Executive Director
Gillian Davidson	Group Executive Director
Fiona Stilwell	Managing Director, Activate Apprenticeships
Paul Newman	Group Executive Director
Jon Adams	Group Executive Director
Karl George	Internal Audit Associate
Jana Zacheva	Internal Audit Associate
Alison Webster	CEO, TVB LEP; <i>as indicated in the minutes</i>
Nigel Tipple	CEO, Ox LEP; <i>as indicated in the minutes</i>

CLERK:

Faith Hanks	Governance Executive Assistant
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MINUTES

The meeting started at 15:00.

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1. Apologies for Absence

It was noted that JC would be joining the meeting slightly late. No other apologies for absence were received.

2. Appointments

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that KG and JZ would be observing the meeting as part of the Governance Audit.

The Chair notified the Board that the Director of Governance and Clerk to the Corporation was unable to attend the meeting, which was due to be her last

MINUTE
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ACTION

meeting with the Board, and recommended that Faith Hanks was appointed as Clerk for the meeting and as Interim Clerk to the Corporation until a substantive Clerk to the Corporation was appointed. The Board approved the appointment of Faith Hanks as Clerk for the meeting, and Interim Clerk to the Corporation. **All members were agreed.**

The Chair noted that the terms of office for Andy Stone and Sue Sturgeon were due to expire on 01 April 2021, and the Search & Governance Committee recommended the reappointments of both governors for a further term of office. The Board approved the reappointments of Andy Stone and Sue Sturgeon for a further term. **All members were agreed.**

The Chair notified the Board that Nina Robinson had resigned from the Board.

JE joined the meeting at 15:04.

3. Declarations of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality

JVK advised that she had been appointed as Chair of Trustees at the Cyber Hub Trust, and was part of the DfE's Advisory Group and Schools Bootcamps. No other member declared any interest.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of 07 December 2020

The minutes of the meeting of 07 December 2020, having previously been circulated to the Board, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. **All members were agreed.**

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 07 December 2020

The Clerk provided an update on the matters arising from the meeting of 07 December 2020, and noted that all actions were complete.

AW and NT joined the meeting at 15:05.

6. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

The Chair introduced the CEOs of TVB LEP, Ox LEP and EM3 LEP, and the Group Executive Director (PN) briefly outlined how the three local LEPs worked with Activate Learning (AL). The CEO of TVB LEP provided an overview of role of the LEPs, and noted the collective focus around delivering local economic growth and the role LEPs had in building skills. It was noted that each of the LEPs had strong connections with local partners within the FE sector, and provided these partners with future curriculum and skills needs, in addition to providing funding opportunities. It was noted that LEP Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) played a key role in considering relevant skills, market requirements, or skills deficits, in order to drive local skills priority statements and economic recovery plans.

The Board considered the level of representation within the SAPs, and the CEO of TVB LEP noted the need to involve young people and younger businesses who, as the future of the economy, would help to establish changes in patterns of work and employment. It was also noted that SAPs were only a fraction of the LEP network, which included various local groups and communities. While the three LEPs worked collaboratively within the network, bringing businesses together across the counties, it was noted that each LEP had its own strategy to promote growth locally; the broad focus of the strategies was on recovery planning for local economies as a result of COVID-19.

The CEO of Ox LEP provided further detail on the recovery plans and noted the importance of developing the future workforce and building skills specific to local labour markets. It was noted that local economies would see a shift as a result of COVID-19 and subsequent high levels of unemployment, and that the economic situation would provide a valuable opportunity to accelerate investment in skills and digital technology. It was noted that recovery would not be as swift where

MINUTE
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ACTION

economies were focussed around sectors such as retail, which included Bracknell and Reading; learning and retraining would therefore be important contributors to recovery in these areas.

MH joined the meeting at 15:31.

The CEO of EM3 LEP outlined the LEPs' priorities moving forwards, particularly in light of the FE White Paper; working together to maximise skills improvement in the FE sector was at the heart of the LEP recovery plans, as well as an emphasis on behavioural changes and alternative ways of working. It was noted that supporting business engagement would be critical for achieving change, and although future capital investment was expected to be lower, the LEPs would continue to support investment proposals.

It was noted that capital funding rules had recently changed, and FE funding would now be sought directly from the ESFA, rather than through the LEPs. While funding was expected to decrease, it was noted that the full spending review had not yet been published, however strategic positioning would be important for attracting FE funding. As a result of the expected decrease in funding, the importance of collaboration between FE colleges was noted, and the LEP CEOs assured the Board that they were encouraging collaboration and the sharing of skills.

The meeting was adjourned at 15:53 and AW and NT left the meeting.

7. Deep Dive – Planning our Next Strategic Plan

The meeting was reconvened at 16:00, and AA left the meeting.

The Chair noted that, as part of the development of the Strategic Plan, governors has been asked to consider critical priorities in their areas of work over the next 5-8 years. Each Board member was given three minutes to share their ideas, which were broadly summarised into themes (detailed ideas are attached as an appendix):

JVK: technology, people, collaboration

DM: technology, people

MW: sustainability, people, technology

ES: technology, people

PO: people, collaboration

AS: sustainability, technology

TJ: people, sustainability, technology

JD: technology, people, sustainability

JVK left the meeting at 16:30.

DG: technology, sustainability, people

AA rejoined the meeting at 16:33.

JE: people, collaboration

KS: people, technology

AA: sustainability, people

SS: collaboration, people, technology, sustainability

The DCEO outlined the development process for the new Strategic Plan and provided some background on the development of previous Strategic Plans. It was noted that, as agreed at the October Strategy meeting, the Vision, Mission

MINUTE
NO.

ACTION

and Values from the 2017-2021 Plan would remain the same, as would the Learning Philosophy, and a further two strategic drivers had been established: Sustainability and Wellbeing.

JC joined the meeting at 16:48.

The DCEO noted that, while the new Strategic Plan would continue to focus on the learner journey, the Plan would include more detailed divisional plans, and more detailed strategies for Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA), HR, Estates, and Student Voice. It was noted that further drafts of the new Strategic Plan would be shared at the May Governors' Away Day, before the Plan was launched in July.

The Group Executive Director (CA) presented an overview of the development of the TLA Strategy, and noted that embedding the Learning Philosophy had been a key feature, with a particular focus on how learning was positively impacted by managing emotions, forming relationships and adopting a trauma-informed approach. It was noted that the TLA Strategy would influence the cultural ways of learning and working, and so far both the Group Executive Team (GET) and Faculty Directors had been consulted.

The Group Executive Director (PN) provided an update on the work around Student Experience and the learner journey, including the development of the student charter, the development of a careers guidance platform, and the role of the new Heads of Campus – Student Experience.

BS left the meeting at 17:00 and JVK rejoined the meeting.

It was noted that the Learning Philosophy was core to the Student Experience work, and that the 'emotions' element of the Philosophy was a focal point, encompassing the trauma-informed approaches to learning.

KG joined the meeting at 17:03.

The Group Executive Director (JA) presented an update on business development and engagement, and noted the need to target learners within the 19+, HE and Commercial groups, in order to better support businesses and target more learners. It was noted that the development of online and blended learning would be an important factor in targeting more learners, and the success of AL's new online Nursing course, open to international learners, was highlighted. The Group Executive Director (JA) also noted the focus on retraining adults through learning, and provision for training the unemployed.

The CFO briefly outlined the review of business systems, and noted that a strategy was currently being developed in collaboration with colleagues, to move away from the complexity of the current system, and to better use data and technology to enhance the campus experience.

The Chair invited JC to share his thoughts on critical priorities over the next 5-8 years, summarised as follows:

JC: sustainability, collaboration

The meeting was adjourned at 17:20 and DG left the meeting. The meeting was reconvened at 17:25.

The CEO thanked governors for sharing their critical priorities, and the GET noted that the themes aligned with the new Strategic Plan. The Board discussed the approaches to tackling digital poverty, and the CFO notified the Board that the government had allocated 450 devices to AL for disadvantaged learners.

8. Quality

The Board received the Curriculum and Quality Improvement Plan Update report, and the DCEO presented a brief overview of progress against the improvement

MINUTE
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ACTION

priorities. The Board asked for assurance around the retention figures, particularly within the Technology Faculty, and the DCEO advised that AL's retention figures were in line with averages for the sector. The Group Executive Director (BGJ) noted the recent successes within the Technology Faculty, and assured the Board that the Faculty leadership team had been focussing on both compliance and performance, to improve retention.

9. Finance

The Board received the Finance Update, and the CFO presented an overview of the forecast, noting a significant reduction in EBITDA due to the disruption of COVID-19. It was noted that AL remained resilient to the predicted effects on profitability, due to the strong cash balance and new income streams. The CFO also noted that the remainder of the Condition Improvement Fund was open for application for all FE corporations.

JVK rejoined the meeting at 18:00.

The CFO advised the Board that the opportunity for a contract extension with The Oxford Partnership (TOP) was problematic and seemed unlikely, so work was underway to close TOP.

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee informed the Board that she had received assurance from the CFO in response to her questions raised offline around cash resilience, consultancy payment risk and TOP payments.

10. CEO Report

The Board received and noted the CEO Report and the CEO provided a brief update on the Ruskin College merger bid, noting that AL had been recommended as the preferred provider for Ruskin College.

JVK noted that many colleges had reported a lack of engagement with online learning, and the CEO advised that the picture was mixed across AL; some students were engaging extremely well whilst others struggled. The CEO advised that Progress and Intervention Coaches had been employed to help with remote learning. The GET advised that it was particularly challenging to engage learners on practical courses, however planning was in place around how to effectively resume practical classes as soon as campuses were allowed to reopen.

11. Link Governor Update

The Inclusion Link Governor provided a brief update on the EDI Committee meeting earlier that day, and advised that the Committee and Thematic Working Groups were making good progress.

12. Use of the Corporation Seal

The Board received the Use of the Corporation Seal Report and approved the following applications of the corporation seal:

- Institute of Technology: Deed of Guarantee and Sub Licence Agreement – 08 December 2020
- Merrist Wood Golf Club: Deeds of Variation and Deed of Covenant – 11 December 2020

All members were agreed.

13. Policies

The Board received and approved the following policies:

- 2020/21 Equality Objectives
- 2019/20 Equality Report
- Statement of British Values

MINUTE
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ACTION

- Sustainability Policy

All members were agreed.

14. Risk & Compliance

The Board noted the Safeguarding report, which was taken as read.

KG, JZ, MH, SB, LN, CA, BGJ, GD, FS, PN and JA left the meeting at 18:17.

15. Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

16. Dates of Upcoming Meetings

08 – 09 March 2021

07 June 2021

19 April 2021

19 July 2021

10 – 11 May 2021

The meeting closed at 18:30.

Chair S I Sturgeon Date 29/04/21