

ACTIVATE LEARNING FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

MEETING OF THE CORPORATION

Meeting date: **07 June 2021**

Venue: **Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT:

Sue Sturgeon (5/5)	Chair of the Corporation
Dermot Mathias (5/5)	Vice Chair of the Corporation
Sally Dicketts (5/5)	Chief Executive Officer
Pauline Odulinski (5/5)	
Malcolm Wicks (5/5)	
Julia von Klonowski (5/5)	
Emma Shipp (5/5)	
David Goosey (4/5)	
Ben Sims (5/5)	<i>As indicated in the minutes</i>
Jamie Edge (3/3)	
Megan Henderson (3/3)	
John Cope (4/5)	<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
Fiona Stilwell	Managing Director, Activate Apprenticeships
Paul Newman	Group Executive Director
Faith Hanks	Governance Executive Assistant
Louise Basu	Group Director of People and Change; <i>as indicated in the minutes</i>
Diko Blackings	Group Inclusion Manager; <i>as indicated in the minutes</i>
Saskia Larsen	Head of HRD; <i>as indicated in the minutes</i>
Elsbeth Tibbetts	Curriculum Director; <i>as indicated in the minutes</i>
Sandra Prail	ETF Representative

CLERK:

Perry Perrott	Director of Governance and Clerk to the Corporation; <i>appointed under item 1</i>
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MINUTES

The meeting started at 16:05.

**MINUTE
NO.**

ACTION

1.

Apologies for Absence and Appointment of Clerk to the Corporation

Apologies for absence were received from Kathy Slack (3/4), Andy Stone (4/5) and Angela Adimora (3/4), and it was noted that Julia Von Klonowski would be slightly late to the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Sandra Prail to the meeting, and noted that she was observing the meeting as part of the ETF's Board Review pilot scheme. It was noted that a questionnaire to support the Board Review would be circulated to Governors after the meeting.

JC and BS joined the meeting at 16:08.

MINUTE
NO.

ACTION

Further to the email circulated to the Board in advance of the meeting, the Chair introduced Perry Perrott to the Board. The Board approved the recommendation to appoint Perry as Director of Governance and Clerk to the Corporation. **All members were agreed.**

2. Declarations of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality

No member declared any interest, gift or hospitality.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of 19 April 2021

The minutes of the meeting of 19 April 2021, having previously been circulated to the Board, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. **All members were agreed.**

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 19 April 2021

The Clerk provided an update on the matters arising from the meeting of 19 April 2021, and noted that all actions were complete.

5. Deep Dive – Culture, Diversity and Inclusivity

The Chair introduced the Group Director of People and Change, the Group Inclusion Manager, the Head of HRD, and the Curriculum Director to the meeting, and the Group Inclusion Manager provided an overview of her role at Activate Learning (AL), outlining her background and personal experiences with diversity and inclusivity. The Group Inclusion Manager noted the ambition to create an inclusive working environment, and to embed quality and inclusion across all areas of the organisation. In terms of progress to date, it was noted that various staff groups had been established to promote and discuss diversity, and there were ongoing assessments of staff data, in order to establish the diversity of the workforce at AL, and to determine support methods for those with protected characteristics. It was also noted that conversations were ongoing with external stakeholders of educational institutions to ensure the work across the organisation was culturally competent.

The Head of HRD provided a brief overview of her role in the aspiration to promote AL as an inclusive employer, noting that a learning and development function had been established to foster a sense of inclusion among staff, including a module for the 'inclusive manager'. It was also noted that a sense of belonging was important to employees, as well as continuing to encourage open and honest conversations in relation to staff experiences around diversity and inclusivity.

The Curriculum Director provided an overview of the work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee in promoting diversity and inclusivity, and noted the three driving objectives of the Committee: to foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and to advance equality of opportunities. It was noted that there were three Working Groups within the EDI Committee, which focussed on staff and governor inclusivity, the retention of students declaring a mental health difficulty, and the retention of learners of mixed ethnicity and white ethnicity. The Curriculum Director also noted that a Black Lives Matter staff group had been formed, which also included five sub-groups, all of which aimed to ensure that AL was an anti-racist organisation, and that there was a sense of equality embedded throughout the organisation, rather than simply through policy.

The Board thanked the Group Director of People and Change, the Group Inclusion Manager, the Head of HRD and the Curriculum Director for their presentation, and noted the importance of the work around creating a positive experience for all staff and students through the promotion of diversity.

JVK joined the meeting at 16:45.

The Inclusion Link Governor (PO) provided an update on her work with the EDI Committee, and commended Committee members for their openness and transparency. The Inclusion Link Governor also noted her support for promoting conversations around the diversity and experiences of individuals within the AL group, and considered the power of governors telling their stories, to build a picture of different experiences and to further encourage open conversations.

LB, DB, SL and ET left the meeting at 16:53.

6. Strategic Planning Update

The Board received the Strategic Planning Update and External Brochure, which were taken as read, and the DCEO provided a brief verbal update on the strategic planning process. The Board noted their support for the External Brochure, and approved the recommendation to adopt the Brochure, subject to final amendments.

The CEO informed the Board that Governors would be asked to review the documents which underpinned the Strategic Plan, the Divisional Plans, for discussion at the Governors' Away Day before the plans were formally adopted in July.

7. Finance – Management Accounts & Year-End Forecast

The Board received the Finance Update, which was taken as read, and the CFO presented an overview of the current financial position, noting that the decline in EBITDA had stabilised since the April Corporation meeting. The CFO noted however, in line with the sector, COVID-19 related losses were significant, particularly through income reductions in adult learning, commercial activity, and the apprenticeship market. Despite the significant income losses, it was noted that the cash balance remained strong, and the completion of the disposal of the Farnham College tennis courts would partially offset the accounting deficit. It was also noted that, due to the decision to terminate the contract with the Saudi Colleges, significant cash sums had already been received, with the full settlement of invoices expected by the end of the year.

The CFO provided a brief overview of the planning around the 2021/22 budget, noting the proposal to set a small deficit budget of £0.75m for the upcoming year, based on the approach for 2020/21. It was noted that the full 2021/22 budget proposal would be presented at the July Corporation meeting. The Board discussed the proposal to set a deficit budget for the 2021/22 year, and noted that, in the context of the sector and the extenuating circumstances of the last year, the proposed deficit of £0.75m was relatively small. The Board noted, however, that the deficit budget would still be challenging to achieve, and advised that caution was taken around monitoring costs. The CEO assured the Board that costs and faculty contributions were under constant review, and the Board noted their initial support for the proposal to implement a deficit budget for the upcoming year.

The meeting was adjourned at 17:35 and reconvened at 17:45.

8. Strategic KPI Summary

The Board received the Strategic KPI Summary, which was taken as read, and the DCEO noted that the report took a different approach to usual, focussing on updates against three the key risk areas highlighted at the April Corporation meeting: the risk of low adult recruitment in FE, the risk to improvements in self-assessment grades for the Technology and Creative Industries faculties, and the risk to raising the overall and timely apprenticeship completion rates. It was noted that the risks to the improvements to the self-assessment grades and apprenticeship completions had been lowered, however adult recruitment

MINUTE
NO.

ACTION

remained a significant risk. The Managing Director of Activate Apprenticeships assured the Board that overall completion rates were improving, and timely completion rates had seen a 19% increase.

The Board noted their support for the format of the report, focussing more closely on risks and mitigations, and suggested that this approach was considered for future reports.

9. CEO Report

The Board received and noted the CEO Report, and the CEO provided a brief update on application numbers and progress around the enrolment system. The Board considered the impact of the FE Skills Bill on AL, and the opportunities that it could present to the group.

10. Use of Corporation Seal

There were no used of the corporation seal to report.

11. Safeguarding Policy

The Board received and approved the Safeguarding Policy. **All members were agreed.**

12. Stakeholder Report

The Board received and noted the Stakeholder Reports.

13. Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

14. Dates of Upcoming Meetings

21 – 22 June 2021

19 July 2021

The meeting closed at 18:35.

Chair *S L Sturgeon* Date **24th July 2021**