

MINUTES OF SEARCH & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9TH OCTOBER 2020

Present: Neil McGrath External
Mary Murphy Principal
Wesley Rourke External (Chair)

In Attendance: Lesley Venables Clerk to the Governors

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1 Apologies for absence were received from Valerie Allen.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2 Declarations of interest were received from Neil McGrath and Wesley Rourke in respect of minutes 18 and 19 respectively.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

3 **Resolved -** That Wesley Rourke be appointed as Chair for the 2020/2021 academic year.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4 **Resolved -** That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING

5 Governors received a progress report against the list of actions resulting from the previous meeting. It was noted that the majority of these points had been completed.

6 Under minute 39 the Clerk reported that governors were in the process of completing electronic training modules on safeguarding, equality & diversity, Prevent and GDPR. A reminder would be sent to those who had not yet undertaken the modules and technical assistance would be offered to resolve any IT issues, if required.

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020

7 The Clerk presented the annual report on search and governance issues during 2019/2020 and set out a number of priorities for 2020/2021.

8 A target level of attendance of 80% had been set for Board and committee meetings for the 2019/2020 academic year. Overall attendance at Board meetings was 89% (compared to 87% in 2018/2019) and the target had been achieved for 4 out of 5 committees, with the Quality & Standards Committee performing below the target (XX%). The Clerk reported that most absences were for work or holiday reasons and had been notified well in advance.

9 The majority of governors had met or exceeded the target attendance levels. Attendance formed part of the annual performance evaluation process and the Clerk had not identified any issues during her meetings with individual governors. It was noted that, due to the small number of committee meetings during an academic year, any absence had a significant impact on the individual's attendance figure.

10 Following the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings had taken place for both the Board and its committees since April 2020. This has enabled a refocus of the agendas and accompanying paperwork on the key decisions to meet the Board's responsibilities and to align with external reporting requirements. Attendance had increased further and this would continue to be closely monitored in 2020/2021. It was noted that there had been no issues surrounding quoracy during the year.

11 Governors were reminded of the appointments, re-appointments and resignations that had taken place in 2019/2020. At the end of July 2020 there was one vacancy for an external governor. A candidate had already been identified for this role and the appointment was due for approval by the Board in October 2020.

12 The Committee received information on the equality and diversity profile of the Board. Governors discussed possible actions that could be taken to improve the Board's diversity and it was agreed that future advertisements would be tailored to encourage applications from individuals from a wider background and with a broader range of experiences.

13 Governance processes and procedures were kept under review by the Clerk, with any amendments submitted to the Board for approval. Developments in 2019/2020 included a revised skills audit and updating the performance review process to align more closely with the Board's priorities.

14 Maintaining high levels of governor attendance, recruiting suitably qualified and a wider profile of governors to fill any vacancies, succession planning, continuing to upskill the Board and a greater use of technology to support the Board's operation would be high priorities in 2020/2021.

MEMBERSHIP ISSUES & SUCCESSION PLANNING

15 Governors received a report on membership issues, including current and forthcoming vacancies, succession planning and possible recruitment strategies.

16 As set out in minute 11 there was currently a vacancy for one external governor, which would be filled at the October Board meeting.

17 The recent skills audit had identified a number of potential gaps in the Board's profile, which would inform future recruitment processes.

18 The terms of office of Karen Banks and Neil McGrath would expire in July 2021. As part of the performance review process the Clerk had discussed their future intentions on Board membership and both had indicated that they wished to seek a further term of office, subject to Board approval. Governors were advised that Karen Banks was currently in her first term of office, but that Neil McGrath would then have already served a total of 10 years as a governor. The Clerk reported that it was possible for the Board to extend Neil's tenure, as he had taken on additional responsibilities, both as Chair of the Audit Committee and as one of the two vice-chairs.

19 The Committee also noted that the terms of office of Wesley Rourke and Susan Smith were due to expire in July 2022. By then, Wesley would have served for a total of 12 years (3 terms of 4 years each) and Susan for 6 years (one 4 year term and one 2 year term). Discussions would take place early in 2021/2022 to ascertain their future intentions.

20 Both staff governors' terms of office would expire between October and December. A process was already underway to seek a replacement for one of these vacancies and it was hoped that nominations for both posts would be submitted to the Board's December 2020 meeting.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

21 Governors received the latest schedule of committee memberships to which a number of amendments were suggested to take account of recent governor appointments, subject to the agreement of the respective individuals.

22 **Resolved -** That the Board **be RECOMMENDED** to approve a revised schedule of committee memberships.

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS REVIEW 2019/2020

23 The Clerk presented a report on the annual review of confidential business for 2019/2020. It was noted that it was a requirement under the Instrument of Government to review regularly those items previously designated by the Board as confidential to determine whether they could now be categorised as non-confidential.

24 **Resolved -** That the Committee's recommendations regarding the release of confidential minutes be submitted to the Board for approval.

COMMITTEE SELF-EVALUATION 2019/2020

25 Governors received a draft of the Committee's Self-Evaluation for 2019/2020. This measured performance in several areas, including attendance, membership, fulfilment of the terms of reference, a summary of activities and areas for improvement.

26 The Committee graded its performance as a '5' or 'outstanding'.

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS 2018/2019

27 Governors received for information a summary of the outcomes of the performance evaluation process for 2019/2020. This set out a number of areas of good practice and identified areas for improvement (either for individual governors or for the Board as a collective).

28 An outline list of training needs had been prepared and featured in the report, together with suggested actions to address any issues and further improve the Board's operation. This would form the basis of an action plan for 2020/2021, progress against which would be reported to subsequent Committee meetings.

29 The majority of gradings for each of the questions in the proforma completed by governors ranged from '5' or 'Outstanding' to '4' or 'Good'.

30 Performance levels for the Chair of the Board continued to be high, with no issues raised by governors.

GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENTS

31 The Clerk presented a summary of a recent report on the role of the Clerk published by the Further Education Trust for Leadership – “The Hidden Strategic Leader”.

ITEMS TO BE REPORTED TO THE BOARD

32 The Chair summarised the content of the meeting which would be reported to the Board's October 2020 meeting:

- Committee's Annual Report for 2019/2020 was received for information. The main priorities for 2020/2021 are: maintaining high levels of attendance, recruiting suitably qualified and a wider profile of governors to fill any vacancies, succession planning, upskilling the Board and a greater use of technology to support the Board's operation
- Report received on membership and succession planning issues
- Revised committee schedule and review of confidential business for 2019/2020 were recommended for approval by the Board
- Committee's performance was graded as a '5' or 'outstanding'
- Report on the role of the Clerk in FE was received for information

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be arranged.

Wesley Fowke

Signed:

Chair of Search & Governance Committee

13.10.21.

Date: