

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
held on 6 July 2023 at 9.00 am
at Sparsholt College

¹PRESENT: G Davies (E); N Hopkins (E, Chair) (except minute 294); J Lander (E); C McCormack (E); J Milburn (P); S Morgan (E); A Neal (E); J Orlowski (St) (to minute 382); C Wilson (E, Co-Vice Chair) (except minute 294).

In attendance: S Grant – Deputy Principal (to minute 382)
N Heslop - Director of Finance (to minute 382)
D Mernagh – Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education (to minute 299)
A Robertson – Governance Co-ordinator (to minute 299)
B Stokes – Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover College) (to minute 299)
M Treagust – Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt College) (until minute 299)
S Willson - Head of Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES & MEMBERSHIP

181. Apologies were received from J Emm, T Floyd, P Jordan, N Moody and H Perry.
182. The two FE Student Governors, G Morris and S Rai, had completed their terms of office.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

183. There were no new interests to declare. The Board's Register of Interests records members who hold (unremunerated) directorships of the College's subsidiary companies.

MINUTES

184. **Resolved** – that the minutes (Parts 1) of the meetings held on 30 March and 17 May 2023 be confirmed.
185. Adult skills budget (minute 28/23): The college had not been successful in its bid to the DfE for additional 19+ funding for 2023-24 to support extension of the Building Heroes partnership project and other options were being considered.
186. Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) (31/23): The LSIF expression of interest had been submitted by the deadline and would provide mobilisation funding to support the development of detailed proposals to be submitted by 15 September.
187. Accountability Statement (minute 45/23): The final version of the Accountability Statement had been approved and submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) by the deadline of 31 May 2023.

¹ (E) = External; (P) = Principal; (S) = Staff; (SCS) = Sparsholt College Services Staff Governor; (St) = Student

188. T Levels (minute 47/23): The Principal updated the Board on the deferment of some T Level pathways.
189. Apprenticeships (minutes 83/23): The college, together with others in the sector, had been successful in campaigning for changes to the Level 2 Arborist apprenticeship End Point Assessment (EPA). These would also be applicable where relevant retrospectively and enable more positive outcomes for students.
190. FE Bursaries Policy (minute 89/23): There had been no response received from the ESFA yet to the query about bursary regulations reported at the previous meeting. It was confirmed that the new policy for 2023-24 had therefore been published without the proposed additional change which was the subject of the ESFA query. This would continue to be kept under review.
191. Health & Safety (minute 104/23): An internal audit on health and safety in relation to student activities had been included in the proposed 2023-24 internal audit plan.
192. It was noted that the resolutions of the Board had been enacted and that there were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

CHAIR OF GOVERNORS' REPORT

193. The Board had received and noted the report of the Chair which summarised activities he had undertaken since the March 2023 meeting of the Board and forthcoming events and matters requiring his consideration.
194. The Chair acknowledged on behalf of the Board the hard work and commitment of the SLT and college teams over the preceding months.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT AND STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-23

195. The Board had received the report of the Principal summarising key developments at the college since the March meeting of the Board, and progress against strategic objectives for 2022-23. The report also included the certification of expenditure for the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) for assurance.
196. The Principal drew the Board's attention to key points in the report, providing additional explanation and updates.
197. In relation to financial health, the Board noted the latest application figures and sought assurance about the likely conversion of applications to enrolments. Examples were provided about the attendance and feedback at Andover College taster days and the pattern of applications from feeder schools, with the important on keeping-in-touch activities emphasised.
198. In relation to collaborative activities and meeting skills needs, it was confirmed that the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) nine key regional priorities included land-based. The Board noted that an expression of interest had been submitted to stage one of the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) for mobilisation funding, with a more detailed stage two application for delivery funding to be submitted in September.
199. The Board received and noted the annual certification of expenditure for the SDF 2022-23 from auditors Buzzacott LLP (known as 'Annex G') which provided assurance that the

DfE grant conditionals had been met and the grant funding spent for the intended purposes. (The document had been received after the Audit Committee meeting and was therefore received by the Board.) The Board welcomed the clean audit, and the Deputy Principal thanked the Finance team for their work.

200. The Board noted that the Principal had accepted the role of Chair of the Landex Quality & Curriculum Committee which, in addition to her role chairing the National Land Based College (NLBC)'s Strategic Partnership Group, provided the college with excellent collaboration and partnership routes.
201. The Board noted the amendments to the Ofsted inspection regime from September 2023 and that the college's Head of Learning & Quality had qualified as an Ofsted inspector.
202. In relation to 'Our People', the Board noted the appointment of Emily Legge as the newly established Assistant Principal – English, Maths & Adult Education and congratulated Amy Robbins for her promotion to Learning & Standards Manager and receipt of the Teaching and Learning Award at the recent Hampshire Education Awards.
203. The Board noted the outcome of the consultation with unions on the 2022/23 pay award and that the award was being implemented. Members discussed the UCU decision to move to a national ballot on FE pay in September with the intention of industrial action from October and the context for the arrangements with the unions at the college. Several points were raised which the Principal undertook to consider further.
204. The Board discussed a number of the reported activities in relation to the Andover and Sparsholt campuses and University Centre Sparsholt, including examples of civic/community and education sector engagement. Members sought additional information about exploratory work in the relation to training for Hampshire's viticulture industry and the potential to collaborate on supporting County Farms and were assured that opportunities and risks were being considered by management with due care.
205. The Board noted that the college's consultants had submitted outline planning applications to Winchester City Council for two versions of the new HE centre, with the larger version subject to securing potential funding via the EM3 LEP. In the meantime, the project was being progressed to a full procurement exercise to meet the build timetable.
206. In relation to employer engagement, the Board noted the update on Industry Work Placements with excellent delivery of work placements in 2022-23 but no guidance from the DfE/ESFA as to support for learners eligible to rollover work placements to the next academic year. The financial impact had been accounted for in the proposed 2022-23 budget. The Principal confirmed that the college continued to lobby the DfE via Landex and its local MPs.
207. The Board noted the progress reported on delivery of the Strategic Plan annual milestone objectives year to date was positive. Responding to a member's query about the RAG rating of objective AMO106, the Board agreed that this should be amended to 'N/A' as the Board had made an in-year decision not to pursue this objective this year. Asked by a Student Governor about the objective to include sustainability training in the 14-16 schools offer, the Principal confirmed the objective remained and that relevant learning material was available and being adapted to launch in the 2023-24.

2023-24

- 208. The Board had received the proposed College Group Strategic Operating Plan for 2023-24, which set out the annual milestone objectives and targets to progress the Strategic Plan 2021-2024.
- 209. The Principal explained the approach to setting the annual milestone objectives and targets, highlighting a number of the key developments.
- 210. The Board noted that the targets defined in the Accountability Statement had been included and that progress would be reported at Board meetings.
- 211. It was noted that the plan included several developments in relation to the 'Our People' section of the strategy and members sought further information about the development of 'staff voice' meetings and the investment in professional development of staff, with examples given of training support and opportunities to obtain higher qualifications for academic staff. Members also welcomed the focus on equality, diversity and inclusion and noted the planned introduction of 'safe space' meetings to create and support change.
- 212. A member highlighted the previous discussions about researching alternative pay and benefit structures to assist with recruitment challenges and suggested that further activity be reflected in targets in the Operating Plan. To provide context for members, the Principal summarised the work to date, as reported to the Resources Committee, and additional factors which had subsequently been identified in relation to the public sector and colleges.
- 213. Having considered the current position, the Board agreed that the SLT report to the Resources Committee on any further developments and next steps and that this did not require a specific objective/target in the Operating Plan.
- 214. **Resolved** – that the Strategic Operating Plan for 2023-24 be endorsed.

PROPERTY STRATEGY

- 215. The Board had received the report of the Deputy Principal proposing an update to the Property Strategy in relation to student accommodation.
- 216. The Board discussed the proposal to add to the Property Strategy an objective to develop an additional 150 units of student accommodation in the medium to long-term in recognition of the growth in FE student applications for the Sparsholt campus and the ambitions for HE with the building of a new facility and the extension of the HE offer. The SLT recommended that the college aim for the need to grow student accommodation to be reflected in the new iteration of the Winchester City Council Local Plan to support delivery of the Property Strategy in the future.
- 217. A member sought further assurance about the strategic need and benefits for additional accommodation and the Principal and Deputy Principal explained relevant factors, including the capacity pressure for onsite FE accommodation, the rising costs of travel, and the upward trend in regional demographic data for FE and HE. It was noted that the figure of 150 was a broad estimate of the high end of potential future need.
- 218. Members were supportive of including flexibility in the Property Strategy to develop additional student accommodation, noting that this did not represent a commitment to

prioritise investment and that plans would be required to be developed and financially modelled at such time as relevant. The Board was content for the SLT to revise the figure of 150 upwards or downwards if the SLT considered this was necessary.

219. **Resolved** – that the Property Strategy be amended to identify the future need for new student accommodation units to be built on the Sparsholt campus.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

220. The Board had received and reviewed the latest Healthcheck report (2023-Issue 05) of key performance indicators, noting in particular the latest student data in relation to retention and achievement for 2022-23.

FINANCE

Management Accounts

221. The Board had received the latest monthly management accounts (to 31 May 2023), including an update on the in-year financial position 2022-23 and cash flow forecast to July 2024.
222. The Director of Finance highlighted the positive forecast outturn for the year and noted the related discussions at the Resources Committee meeting.

Budget

223. The Board had received the report of the Director of Finance proposing the two-year financial forecast for 2023/24 – 2024/25 and the income and expenditure (I&E) budget for 2023/24 including capital expenditure, together with the key budgeting assumptions, a summary of changes in the staffing budget, an assessment of compliance with bank loan covenants, a sensitivity analysis, a cash flow forecast, and a summary of operating capital expenditure. The budget was being recommended by the Resources Committee following detailed scrutiny.
224. The Director of Finance presented the key headlines in the budget and the high-level forecast for the following financial year, including an explanation of key assumptions and the approach to forecasting cost inflation. For context, it was noted that other land-based colleges faced similar tight financial challenges in 2023-24 due to the impact of increased utilities and travel costs, as well as factors such as enrolments.
225. The Principal explained the modelling of the budgeted staff costs and emphasised the aim to provide for as best a pay award as was affordable.
226. The Chair summed up the key points from the Resources Committee meeting, noting that the deficit position on income and expenditure for 2023/24 had been rigorously discussed and that the committee had acknowledged the detailed work by the SLT and Finance team to present a budget which balanced some continuing financial uncertainties and potential in-year upsides. There had also been a recognition that cash levels would reduce in the short-term to enable investment in capital projects for the future sustainability of the college.
227. In response to a member's question about the risks of capital project cost inflation, the Principal provided assurance that project management mechanisms were in place to manage such risks.

228. It was noted that cash flow was forecast to remain healthy for the two-year period and that all bank loan covenants were expected to be met for the foreseeable future.
229. **Resolved** – that the following be approved and reflected in the Financial Forecasting Return to the ESFA (to be confirmed by the Principal):
- a) A budget for 2023/24, which shows a deficit of £95k before FRS 102 pension charges or credits.
 - b) A high-level forecast for 2024/25 before FRS 102 pension charges or credits showing a surplus of £150k.
 - c) An operational capital spend allocation of £1.5 million for 2023/24 and £1.2m for 2024/25, fully funded by the College.

[Addendum – a revised surplus budget was presented to the Board of Governors on 5 October 2023 following the confirmation of additional ESFA funding. The resolution for the approval of the revised budget is recorded in the 5 October 2023 meeting minutes.]

SAFEGUARDING

230. The Board had received the annual report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) on Safeguarding, including Prevent, and the draft annual Child Protection Audit and Improvement Plan for Hampshire County Council.
231. The Board had also received the updated Safeguarding Learners Policy (from 1 September 2023) which had been reviewed to reflect the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) statutory guidance.
232. The DSL gave a presentation to the Board which incorporated a review of safeguarding cases and wider mental health challenges during the year, headlines in relation to Prevent, the focus and new actions for 2023/34, and an overview of the updates to KCSiE, providing the annual update on safeguarding training.
233. The DSL outlined the increase in safeguarding and wellbeing practitioners across both campuses following past challenges from governors which had seen a timely investment in resources in light of increasing demand. It was noted that while there had been a two-year decline after the post-pandemic surge in safeguarding cases, there had been an increase in the complexities of cases and domestic abuse. The college was also working with outside agencies to manage the risk of County Lines activity.
234. In relation to Prevent, the Board was assured by the actions being taken to raise awareness and education learners about local risks and risks specifically associated with areas of the curriculum.
235. The Board noted the key updates to KCSiE were either already addressed by college policies and practices or had actions in place, including the actions being taken by the college in relation to filtering and monitoring of online usage, with the introduction of enhanced monitoring software.
236. The Board welcomed actions undertaken to follow up the Learner Pulse Survey in relation to the safety of learners and the plan to repeat the survey early in the 2023-24

- academic year. Members discussed the continued work in relation to preventing sexual harassment and the availability of the 'See It, Say It' QR code reporting system.
237. The DSL confirmed that safeguarding refresher training for all staff would take place at the start of September, including in relation to KCSiE.
238. The Board reviewed the comprehensive annual report on safeguarding and Prevent.
239. The Safeguarding Lead Governor highlighted the role of Local Authorities in relation to the reported in-year decline in retention for 'Children Looked After' which was partly attributable to residential enrolment at the college being used as an accommodation solution for some care leavers rather than being motivated by the choice of course or some learners not being able to manage the level of independence required. The Principal noted that controls were being put in place to manage this, with early engagement with potential learners and external agencies to check that enrolment was appropriate and to support the learner once enrolled.
240. The Safeguarding Lead Governor also congratulated the college on raising the in-year retention and expected achievement rates for young carers, reflecting the college's investment in wellbeing resources.
241. The Board welcomed confirmation that comprehensive and effective safeguarding practices existed within the College Group and that a culture of adherence to and continuous development of those practices had been established and was being maintained. The Board endorsed the responses to the annual Child Protection Audit conducted for Hampshire County Council (HCC).
242. **Resolved** – that the updated Safeguarding Learners Policy & Procedures (effective from 1 September 2023) be approved.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

243. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 8 June 2023 together with the College's Risk Register Heat Map, the internal audit plan for 2023-24, the external audit plan and strategy for the year to 31 July 2023 and proposed updates to the Data Protection Policy.
244. The Committee Chair drew the attention of the Board to key points from the Audit Committee meeting, including development of the internal and external audit plans and the satisfactory outcome of the internal audit reports. The committee had reviewed the Risk Management Policy and risk register, and these would follow to the Board for approval in October, following the finalisation of the Strategic Operating Plan.
245. **Resolved** – that the following be approved:
- a) Internal audit plan for 2023-24 be approved.
 - b) External audit plan and strategy for the year ending 31 July 2023.
 - c) Updated Data Protection Policy.
246. The Deputy Principal reported that notification had been received the day before that the college had been selected for an ESFA funding audit for the 2022/23 funding year which would be conducted by Mazars. The audit would sample data from the ILR (Individualised Learner Record). The exact timing was to be confirmed.

CURRICULUM, SKILLS & STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE

- 247. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Curriculum, Skills and Stakeholders Committee (CSS) held on 24 May 2023, together with examples of FE students' destinations and new charters.
- 248. The Principal presented key points from the meeting which the Committee Chair had provided to be reported in his absence: the continuing strength of activities in relation to stakeholder engagement and meeting skills needs; confirmation of the recommendation of new charters to publish the college's commitments to employers and the community; the positive FE destinations data.
- 249. **Resolved** – that the Employers Charter and Community Charter be approved and published on the College website.
- 250. The Board noted the committee's review of the annual progress report on the Careers Strategy 2021-25 and endorsement from the Matrix Standard CIC (Continuous Improvement Check) of the adapted approach in the past year to careers guidance provision. It was noted that a new role of Director of Careers & Strategic Engagement was being introduced.
- 251. The Board also noted the committee's review of progress with the HE Access and Participation Plan.
- 252. The committee had conducted the annual review of its performance and terms of reference and the Board noted the continued development of the committee's work during the year. During discussions, AI had been identified as an issue for future consideration by the Board and its committees.
- 253. **Resolved** – that the updated committee terms of reference be approved.

QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

- 254. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Quality & Standards Committee (Q&S) on 22 June 2023, together with updated policies.
- 255. The Committee Chair drew the Board's attention to matters scrutinised by the committee, including key points of the discussion of FE performance. The Committee Chair assured the Board that the delivery of English and Maths teaching and learning would be a standing agenda item for the committee in 2023-24 and noted that English & Maths and Adults would be added to the Governor Link Visits programme.
- 256. The committee had also reviewed and recommended the FE priorities for 2023-24 which would align with the actions to be confirmed in the forthcoming Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).
- 257. **Resolved** – that the FE Curriculum Delivery & Quality Improvement Strategy 2023-24 be approved.
- 258. The Board noted the annual review by the committee of the analysis of complaints received by the college and of the implementation of conduct and performance policies. The committee was content to report that management continued to effectively monitor, investigate and address complaints.
- 259. The Board considered the review of HE and FE policies which were recommended by the committee.

260. **Resolved** that the following policies be approved:

- a) UCS Complaints Management Policy
- b) UCS Quality Enhancement Policy
- c) UCS Scholarly Activity Policy
- d) UCS Withdrawals & Suspension of Studies Policy
- e) UCS Fees Refund Compensation Policy
- f) UCS Academic Appeals Policy
- g) UCS Student Conduct Policy
- h) UCS Academic Support Policy
- i) FE Promoting Effective Learner Performance Policy
- j) Managing FE Learner/Student Conduct Policy

261. The Board noted the annual review of its performance and terms of reference undertaken by the committee and the actions arising.

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

262. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 15 June 2023 (Parts 1 and 2), together with the latest ESFA Governors Dashboard.

263. The Chair of Governors noted the committee matters which had been addressed earlier in the Board meeting and the reporting to the committee on tender waivers, HR matters, the property strategy and capital projects, and sustainability.

264. The committee had undertaken a review of its performance and terms of reference, noting that policies and practices might require further review following the publication of the new ESFA Financial Handbook. The terms of reference had been updated to add a remit for advising the Board on requirements to comply with public sector finance rules.

265. **Resolved** – that the updated committee terms of reference be approved.

WELLBEING

266. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the Wellbeing Committee held on 13 June 2023, which covered equality & diversity, health & safety, safeguarding (including Prevent) and wellbeing matters, together with updated policies. The minutes included the latest data on safeguarding cases and health & safety incidents.

267. The Principal drew the Board's attention to key areas of focus at the meeting, including review of the college's lockdown procedures and actions to improve consistency of the management of student work placements. The Principal also outlined further actions being taken in relation to the road safety of students on and off campus which was a recognised concern, including the option of involving parents of 18+ students where there was a public interest in preventing risk to others, the use of driving bans on campus, and working with outside agencies on education campaigns and improvements to roads and signage.

268. The committee had received the annual review of Health & Safety policies for staff and students by the Health & Safety Manager and recommended the approval of the policies.

269. **Resolved** – that the following be approved with minor amendments:
- a) Health & Safety Policy – Staff
 - b) Health & Safety Policy – Students (Andover)
 - c) Health & Safety Policy – Students (Sparsholt)
270. The committee recommended the policy and practices for the administration of medicines to students which had been updated to reflect circumstances where learners had more complex needs and required more assistance and the policy to prevent unreasonable contact or behaviour towards staff.
271. **Resolved** – that the following be approved:
- a) Policy for the Administration of Medicines
 - b) Managing of Unreasonable Contact and Behaviour Policy

COLLEGE GROUP SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES

Andover Town Football Club Limited (ATFC)

272. The Board had received the minutes of the meeting of the ATFC Board of Directors held on 12 May 2023.
273. The Principal (Chair of ATFC) highlighted the outcome of the football playing season and the approval of ATFC's objectives and budget for 2023/24. The Principal also explained actions arising from an incident of unacceptable behaviour by two young members of the public during a match.
274. It was noted that a decision was still awaited from Test Valley Borough Council on the award of funding for a 3G pitch in the Test Valley area, with the Portway Stadium as one of the options.

Sparsholt College Services Limited (SCS)

275. The Board had received the minutes of the meeting of the SCS Board of Directors of 20 June 2023.
276. The Chair of Governors (Chair of the SCS Board) confirmed that the business of the SCS Board had been routine and that the directors had approved the SCS budget for 2023/24.

GOVERNANCE

Written Resolutions and Chair of Governors' Approvals

277. The Board had received the report of the Head of Corporate Governance on written resolutions by the Board and approvals by the Chair of Governors since the March meeting of the Board. There had been no written resolutions.
278. The Board noted three approvals by the Chair of Governors:
- a) Updates to the IT Acceptable Use Policy to meet the requirements of the Cyber Essentials Plus certification.
 - b) Two further minor updates to the Financial Regulations to respond to new developments since the Financial Regulations were approved by the Board on 30 March.

- c) The final version of the Accountability Statement approved by the Chair of Governors and Principal for submission to the DfE under delegated authority agreed at the 17 May Special Board meeting.

Governance & Search Committee

- 279. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Governance & Search Committee held on 26 June 2023, which provided the annual report to the Board from the committee, and the confidential unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2023. The Board had also received amendments to the Link Visits policy and procedures, a draft role description for a SEND Lead Governor, and a proposal for the external board performance review.
- 280. The Board noted the review of Board and committee membership, including the outcome of interviews for external governor vacancies held in April and June, and the Chair highlighted matters recommended by the committee for approval.
- 281. **Resolved** – that the following be appointed:
 - a) Amanda Rowley as a member of the Board of Governors and the Quality & Standards Committee from 1 September 2023 for a term of office of four years, subject to satisfactory references, DBS and fit and proper person checks.
 - b) Neil Moody as a member of the Quality & Standards Committee from 1 January 2024 (stepping down from Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee).
 - c) Gareth Davies as chair of the Audit Committee for 2023-24.
 - d) Tom Floyd as chair of the Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee for 2023-24.
 - e) Chris Wilson as chair of the Quality & Standards Committee for 2023-24.
 - f) Adrian Neal as chair of the Remuneration Committee for 2023-24 and Paula Jordan as chair designate.
- 282. The committee had considered research from one of its members on potential options for external support for governor recruitment and agreed next steps. The committee had also endorsed updates to the governor role description to refer to the public sector reclassification of colleges and to engagement with stakeholders and meeting skills needs.
- 283. Further to an action arising from the March Board meeting, the Chair explained the committee's discussion of the allocation of 'lead governors', including in relation to the recommendation in the DfE's publication SEND provision and the updated guidance for FE governing bodies. This was in the context of the Board's approach of appointing fixed lead governors where there was a statutory requirement to do so (safeguarding), with expertise, scrutiny and focus otherwise developed through the committee structure and supported by the rolling programme of Link visits and training and development. After careful consideration and further research, the committee proposed that a SEND Lead Governor be introduced and a member sought to be appointed to the role.
- 284. **Resolved** – the role of SEND Lead Governor be introduced and the role description approved.
- 285. The committee had also referred to the statutory careers guidance and DfE guidance for governing bodies in relation to careers provision and agreed that this aligned with the

remit of the Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee (CSS) and the role already undertaken by the Committee Chair.

286. **Resolved** – that the position of Chair of the Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee (CSS) be formally designated as taking a strategic interest in careers education and guidance and to encourage employer engagement.
287. The Board noted the review of the policies and procedures for Link visits to give more information about what the visits should cover, including in relation to student experience and outcomes. In response to a member's request, the Head of Corporate Governance also undertook to update the Links visits report template to provide additional prompts for governors.
288. **Resolved** – that the updated Training, Development and Links Visit Policy and the Links Procedures be approved.
289. The Chair highlighted the proposed appointment of an external consultant to undertake a governance performance review, including the proposed timetable and the costs. Responding to a member's comment that a reference to 'diversity and inclusion' in the proposal document should also encompass 'equality, the Head of Corporate Governance undertook to follow this up with the reviewer.
290. **Resolved** – that Governance4FE (Fiona Chalk) be appointed to undertake the external performance review with a provisional timetable of July 2023 to January 2024.

Governance Report

291. The Board had received the report of the Head of Corporate Governance updating on governance matters, including in relation to recent developments in the FE and HE regulatory environment and the Board's operations.
292. The Board noted the publication of the latest ESFA Post-16 Audit Code of Practice (ACOP), including reference to the Board's responsibilities following reclassification of FE colleges as public sector, and Annex C of the code on regularity concerns.
293. The Chair and Vice Chair left the meeting and did not take part in the following discussion or decision about themselves, other than to confirm their willingness to be appointed.
294. The Head of Corporate Governance reported the outcomes of the performance review of the Chair and Co-vice Chairs of Governors, confirming that 12 members had responded to the surveys and that all had supported the confirmation of appointment of each of the Chair and Vice Chair. There were no issues raised by the members present at the meeting.
295. **Resolved** – that the appointments of Neil Hopkins (Chair of Governors) and Chris Wilson (Vice Chair of Governors) for 2023-24 be confirmed.
296. Confidential matters were recorded separately.
297. The meeting ended at 1.15 pm.

Approved: 5 October 2023 Board of Governors Meeting