

Heart of Yorkshire Education Group Corporation ('Corporation')

Board of Governors

Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 March 2024 ('Meeting')

Present:

Mohammed Ayub, Ruth Baxter, Nigel Brook, Claire Corneille, Louise Elkington (from minute 3), Tony Jackson, George Kilner, Jayne King, Andrew McConnell (**Chair**), David Powell, Martyn Shaw, Vijay Teeluck, Neil Warren and Sam Wright (**Principal**)

In attendance:

Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources (**DFR**), Group Executive Director of Student Experience and Support (**DSE**), Group Executive Director of External Relations and Development (**DER**), Group Executive Director of Curriculum and Quality Standards (**DCQ**), Group Executive Director of People (**DP**), Sandra Prail (AoC) and the Head of Governance and Legal Services (**Clerk**).

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

1.1. The Chair:

1.1.1. Reported that due notice of the Meeting had been given in accordance with the Corporation's Instrument and Articles and its Standing Orders and that a quorum was present. Accordingly, the Chair declared the Meeting open.

1.1.2. Welcomed Sandra Prail, who was carrying out an external governance review for the AoC.

1.1.3. Noted that Luke Aaron had stepped down as Student Governor to concentrate on his exams.

1.2. The Chair noted that Dmitry Fedotov had given his apologies and no response had been received from Faye Banks.

2. Declarations of interest

The Chair asked for declarations of interest. None were given.

3. Member Appointment

3.1. The Chair noted that Louise Elkington had been interviewed by the Search and Governance Committee and received positive feedback. The Committee had recommended her for the Board for four years with a one-year probation and also for the SEND Lead Governor role and it had been suggested that Louise might join the Curriculum and Quality Committee in due course, given her professional experience.

3.2. The Board discussed Louise's application and IT WAS RESOLVED THAT Louise Elkington be appointed as a Governor for four years from the date of the Meeting with a one-year probation and as the SEND Lead Governor.

3.3. Louise joined the meeting, and the Chair initiated a round of introductions.

4. Minutes of Meetings held on 12 December 2023 and 26 February 2024

4.1. The Board reviewed the minutes for accuracy.

4.2. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the minutes of the meetings held on 12 December 2023 and 26 February 2024 were approved.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. The Clerk summarised the progress made on each of the outstanding matters arising. He noted that actions one, four, five and seven remained to be completed.

5.2. In relation to matter four, Governors asked whether the late completion of the Selby Construction Workshop might cause disruption to teaching. Officers confirmed sufficient teaching space would be made available. Governors asked for an update regarding risks associated with the late completion of the construction workshop at the next meeting.

- 5.3.** In relation to matter five, Governors asked for a discussion of the staff cost ratio at the budget deep dive meeting scheduled for June. Members discussed the use of benchmarking and the importance of ensuring the quality of teaching and support above arbitrary comparisons.
- 5.4.** Governors agreed that the reason for the high level of apologies to the Board meeting of 26 February 2024 should be minuted. The meeting had been called on short notice to approve the financial statements for the Group and Selby College's closing accounts to meet an ESFA agreed deadline following completion their audit.

6. Student Update

- 6.1.** The Student Governor gave his update with highlights including the following:
- 6.1.1.** Students had participated in a Governors' development session and provided positive feedback.
 - 6.1.2.** Positive feedback had also been received from open events.
 - 6.1.3.** International Women's Day had been celebrated.
 - 6.1.4.** Animal care and travel students had enjoyed a trip to Fiji, gaining valuable work experience.
 - 6.1.5.** Recycling discussions were underway with the Group's Estates team, and a trial had been planned.
 - 6.1.6.** Selby students had engaged in planting flowers and participating in sustainability week.
 - 6.1.7.** The leaderboard for the Planet Earth Games showed Castleford in third place, Wakefield in tenth, and Selby dropping to eleventh.
- 6.2.** Governors asked about Group activities for Ramadan and Eid. It was noted that discussions were ongoing, including plans for a prayer room and working with

external organisations to support fasting students and fundraising for a food bank was suggested.

- 6.3.** The Student Governor was asked about being a student at the Group. He highlighted the good location and support during exams, contrasting it with his previous education experience where he said he received little support.

7. Chair's Update

The Chair gave an update focussing, in particular, on events he had attended and the February development session. A concern was raised about the timing of development days, which were difficult for some members to attend due to work commitments. Concerns around a lack of access to the student voice was raised as a result of this. There was a discussion around the ways to improve attendance.

8. Principal's Update: (inc. any emerging risks)

- 8.1.** The Principal gave an update including the following highlights with the DSE taking over at minutes 8.1.8 and 8.1.9.

- 8.1.1.** A new Ofsted Chief Inspector had been appointed with whom the Group would try to engage.
- 8.1.2.** Proposed changes to Maths and English delivery hours and funding rules had been proposed by the Government.
- 8.1.3.** The Group had submitted a Levelling Up proposal for funding for higher level skills, on which it was awaiting feedback, and an update to other funding streams was also given.
- 8.1.4.** The stakeholder event held on 17 January had been well attended and generated useful discussions to help inform planning.
- 8.1.5.** The annual Accountability statement would be due for submission by 30 June 2024 and Governor approval would be sought for the updated document in due course.

- 8.1.6.** The Group was hoping to achieve Investors in Diversity accreditation from the National Centre for Diversity starting with the bronze award and progressing, over time, to Gold.
- 8.1.7.** Retention had improved across all provision types except for Apprenticeships which had been affected by a large number of withdrawals the previous year.
- 8.1.8.** The creation of a safe environment remained one of the Group's top priorities and its responsibilities, approach and activities were outlined.
- 8.1.9.** The Group approach to personal development was detailed.
- 8.1.10.** 16-18 recruitment was up overall when compared against the same point the previous year although numbers at Selby College had slightly declined.
- 8.1.11.** The Group had won the Skills Bootcamp Delivery award at the Yorkshire Learning Providers 20th Birthday Awards and had received two further award nominations.
- 8.1.12.** The Group had partnered with Siemens as part of its Project Search provision.
- 8.1.13.** The Children's University had been launched in Selby.
- 8.1.14.** Emerging risks including potential funding reductions, cyber attacks and an upcoming ESFA audit were outlined.
- 8.2.** Governors asked:

 - 8.2.1.** For details of the impact that the Group's approach to personal development had had on students at the next Governor Development Day.
 - 8.2.2.** How officers intended to address attendance issues which may arise because of the proposed increase in Maths teaching hours which, it was

felt, would be unpopular with some students who already disliked the subject. The Principal outlined her strategies including timetabling.

- 8.2.3.** Why attendance was better than at the same stage last year. The Principal noted that the Group had not been doing anything differently but had continued to monitor the matter closely and take action where necessary.
 - 8.2.4.** Officers to tap into contacts at other colleges which had enjoyed awards success to determine the causes for their success.
 - 8.2.5.** Whether the increase in recruitment at Wakefield and Castleford Colleges had been in any way caused by the migration of courses from Selby College. Officers confirmed this was not the case.
 - 8.2.6.** Whether student feedback provided at Governor Development Days could be reported back to the Board.
 - 8.2.7.** Whether students had been involved in activities related to the Israel Gaza conflict. Officers noted that students should be provided with a safe space to discuss this matter but that the College had a responsibility to remain politically neutral while teaching tolerance and respect.
- 8.3.** Governors suggested piloting the proposed changes to Maths and English teaching.

9. Update from the Curriculum and Quality Committee

- 9.1.** The Chair of the Curriculum and Quality Committee started by focussing on the departure of Julian Harrison from the Committee, noting his significant impact. He then went on to provide the following key points from the Committee's two meetings since the last Board meeting:
 - 9.1.1.** The majority of the Quality Improvement Plan (**QIP**) was marked as amber, with specific concerns highlighted around attendance in Maths

and English, reflecting ongoing challenges in student engagement.

However, it was expected the majority of the QIP would be green before the end of the year.

9.1.2. Changes in how the Committee engages with reports were highlighted.

The practice of inviting officers to highlight only key report insights and recent developments had streamlined discussions, ensuring a focused and effective use of meeting time.

9.1.3. The Committee welcomed guest speakers to provide insights into strategic initiatives, which were summarised.

9.2. Committee members shared positive feedback on the meetings' efficiency and depth of discussion and emphasised the Committee's role in supporting organisational strategies, pushing continuous improvement in educational outcomes.

10. Update from the Finance, People and Resources Committee (People Updates)

10.1. The Meeting turned to a consideration of the human resources aspect of the Finance, People and Resources Committee and the following key points from the Committee's last meeting were outlined:

10.1.1. The Committee examined the Group's high attrition rates, which were said to be consistent across the sector and posing recruitment challenges in various professions. However, insights had revealed early signs of progress in certain areas. The Committee had expressed interest in understanding the root causes and action plans associated with these issues.

10.1.2. A discussion had been had regarding recent developments relating to the Group's pay and grading framework project, recognising efforts to align with trade unions and implement new structures. The Committee had

sought clarification on the anticipated impact. Concerns had been noted about limited fallout in specific areas, but positive outcomes were also acknowledged. Risk management strategies were discussed, ensuring preparedness for any adverse effects.

10.1.3. Concerns had been raised about ongoing issues related to sickness absence within the Group. The Committee emphasised the need for data-driven insights to quantify costs and assess their impact on resources which had been hampered due to system migration following the merger. Governors stressed the importance of resolving these issues to facilitate effective tracking of sickness absence trends to support informed decision-making.

10.1.4. The Committee had discussed the relatively low response rate to staff surveys, highlighting concerns about engagement levels. Plans to enhance survey effectiveness and communication strategies had been outlined with an emphasis on the need for meaningful data for ongoing EDI initiatives and employee feedback. The Committee had discussed leadership development as a critical strategy to empower leaders in engaging and motivating staff, particularly in departments facing significant engagement challenges.

10.2. The Committee reflected on the effectiveness of prioritising people within the Committee's agenda and members expressed satisfaction with the depth of discussions. Ongoing efforts to refine performance indicators were highlighted as essential for sustaining positive momentum. The DP outlined the efforts which had been made to set the right performance indicators and improve staff engagement since the last meeting.

10.3. Governors:

- 10.3.1.** Asked for a breakdown of the survey responses by college. The DP noted that response levels were similar at Wakefield and Castleford Colleges and marginally lower at Selby College.
- 10.3.2.** Asked whether the pay proposal was benchmarked against, not just the sector, but competitors for staff in the wider market. The DP noted that the project was primarily a matter of creating a transparent pay structure which dealt with the erosion at the bottom end of the pay scale caused by the implementation of the Real Living Wage and that the Group did not have access to the funding to compete with many competitors.

11. Update from the Remuneration Committee

11.1. The Chair of the Remuneration Committee provided an overview of the Committee's role and frequency of meetings and the following key points from the Committee's last meeting were outlined:

- 11.1.1.** The Committee had undertaken a comprehensive review of the performance and remuneration packages of the Principal and Clerk and decisions resulting from the review process were communicated to the relevant post holders.
- 11.1.2.** The Committee annual report, summarising the remuneration of the Principal, had been discussed. Adjustments to the annual report were subsequently made, virtually, to accommodate necessary changes identified during the meeting.
- 11.1.3.** Policies relating to disciplinary procedures for senior personnel were reviewed and approved during the meeting and the necessity of the same, as distinct from Group wide disciplinary procedures, was verified.

12. Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference

12.1. The Clerk outlined updates to the Committee's terms of reference, highlighting minor administrative changes.

12.2. IT WAS RESOLVED TO approve the amended Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference.

13. Remuneration Committee Annual Report

The Annual Report was submitted for approval. However, the need for further updates were acknowledged. The DP agreed to revise the Remuneration Committee Annual Report for resubmission to the Board.

14. Update from the Search and Governance Committee

14.1. The Chair outlined the following key points from the Committee's last meeting:

- 14.1.1.** The Committee had recommended the appointment of Louise Elkington, as discussed earlier in the Meeting.
- 14.1.2.** Updates were given on ongoing Governor training initiatives and members reviewed the effectiveness of training programs for Governors, noting positive outcomes in enhancing governance oversight.
- 14.1.3.** Plans were outlined to facilitate the election of a new Staff Governor from Castleford College, with nominations to be secured before the next meeting and the steps to appoint a new Selby Student Governor were discussed.
- 14.1.4.** The Committee had discussed the progress made on the Governance Improvement Plan.
- 14.1.5.** A schedule of meetings for the next academic year was due to the next Board meeting.

15. Update from the Finance, People and Resources Committee (Finance and Resources Updates)

15.1. The Board turned to the finance and resources related discussions had at the last Finance, People and Resources Committee and the Chair of the Committee noted the following:

- 15.1.1.** Thanks to the Health and Safety team for delivering an excellent health and safety report which had included comprehensive comparative data, facilitating quality discussions. Areas such as increased incident reporting and near misses were praised. Despite ongoing challenges, particularly in managing legionella risks at Selby College, the Committee had expressed satisfaction with the measures taken to address these concerns.
- 15.1.2.** The Committee had discussed the in-year finance report focussing in on significant expenditure on agency staff, in particular. Members noted this not only impacted on the Group's finances but also raised considerations regarding staff motivation and stability which, it had been agreed, the Group was working hard to rectify. The Committee had also reviewed updates on income streams, noting positives and challenges, especially in anticipated revenue from certain provision types. Despite these challenges, the overall forecast remained optimistic.
- 15.1.3.** The FD had presented a draft Reserves Policy, which had required minor adjustments before it could be proposed for final approval.
- 15.1.4.** Attention had also been given to estate infrastructure projects, particularly focusing on procurement and funding risks associated with the Castleford construction workshop project. Plans had been outlined to mitigate these challenges.

16. Finance Report

- 16.1.** The Board turned to the in-year finance report update noting positives and challenges. The DFR noted the Group was expected to achieve 'Good' financial health and that its cash position was strong.
- 16.2.** Board members sought clarification regarding the increase in agency staff and its link to rising student numbers and specific departmental needs. Officers noted recruitment challenges were primarily in critical areas like engineering, which had proven hard to recruit, for and outlined the strategic approach to managing classroom capacities.

17. Update from the Audit Committee

- 17.1.** The Chair of the Audit Committee gave the highlights of the recent Committee meeting as follows:
- 17.1.1.** The Director of IT had attended the meeting to talk about cybersecurity measures and the progress made in implementing Cyber Essentials. Members had expressed satisfaction with the proactive steps taken to enhance cybersecurity across the organisation.
- 17.1.2.** The Committee had recommended the Risk Management Policy which would be discussed by the Board shortly.
- 17.1.3.** The Committee had considered a range of operational risks, particularly those associated with ESFA apprenticeship funding. Discussions had emphasised the importance of resolving outstanding issues promptly to mitigate future financial risks.

18. Risk Management Policy

- 18.1.** The Board turned to the Risk Management Policy which it had been asked to approve.

18.2. Governors discussed risk categorisations and their alignment with organisational objectives and realities. This included a debate regarding the Board's appetite for minimisation versus complete elimination of risk to ensure clarity and consistency of approach. It was agreed to eliminate the 'very low' risk category.

18.3. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the Risk Management Policy be approved subject to the amendments outlined in minute 18.2.

19. Briefing Papers

The Chair noted that responses to some questions received by email had already been sent, with a few outstanding items to follow up.

20. Review of Effectiveness of Meeting and Identification of Emerging Risk

20.1. The Chair asked members for their opinion as to the effectiveness of the Meeting, noting that emerging risks had been covered in the Principal's update.

Several suggestions and comments were made including:

20.1.1. That arrangements be made to enable the simultaneous viewing of the agenda and relevant documents. Additionally, numbering pages for quick reference was suggested.

20.1.2. Praise was given for the committee reports presented. Governors expressed appreciation for the detailed insights shared, enhancing their understanding of important issues and developments.

20.2. The Chair declared the Meeting closed.



Signed Date 02.07.2024

Actions

No.	Minute	Details	Deadline	Responsibility
1	5.2	Governors asked for an update regarding risks associated with the late completion of the construction workshop at the next meeting.	The next Board meeting	DFR
2	5.3	Governors asked for a discussion of the staff cost ratio at the budget deep dive meeting scheduled for June.	The budget deep dive	DFR
3	8.2.1	Governors asked for details of the impact that the Group's approach to personal	The Governor Development Day of 17 April	DSE

		development had had on students at the next Governor Development day.		
4	8.2.4	Governors asked officers to tap into contacts at other colleges which had enjoyed awards success to determine the causes for their success.	The next Board meeting	All officers
5	8.2.6	Whether student feedback provided at Governor Development Days could be reported back to the Board.	The next Board meeting	DF
6	13	The Annual Report was submitted for	The next Board meeting	DP

		<p>approval.</p> <p>However, the need for further updates were acknowledged.</p> <p>The DP agreed to revise the Remuneration Committee Annual Report for resubmission to the Board</p>		
7	14.1.3	<p>Nominations for a new Castleford Staff Governor to be secured before the next meeting.</p>	<p>The next Board meeting</p>	Clerk
8	14.1.5	<p>A schedule of meetings for the next academic year was due to the next Board meeting.</p>	<p>The next Board meeting</p>	Clerk

<p>9</p>	<p>20.1.1</p>	<p>Arrangements be made to enable the simultaneous viewing of agenda items and relevant documents. Additionally, numbering pages for quick reference was suggested.</p>	<p>The next Board meeting</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
-----------------	---------------	---	-------------------------------	--------------