

## Minutes of a Meeting of the Search and Governance Committee held at 4.30pm on 18 March 2021 by Teams

Present: Norma Boyes (Chair); Tanya Weston;  
Michael Priestley; Chris Nattress

Also present: Jane Murray (Clerk)

### **01/21**      **Minutes**

**Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

### **02/21**      **Declarations of Interest**

None received

### **03/21**      **Search and Governance Mid-Year Report**

The Committee received and noted both the notes from the Self-assessment session in November 2020 and a checklist of performance against the Code of Governance.

Issues arising from both were fed into the Governance Action Plan, which the Committee considered. It was noted that some of the indicators also reflected the performance of the College reflecting the ownership of performance of the College generally. This was true of the first action point on financial sustainability, with the impact of the pandemic this was downgraded to amber, although good challenge on finance could be demonstrated by Governors.

Attendance had been strong on teams, currently running at 96%, which was an improvement of over 10% on the previous year. Some disappointment reflected on the lack of take up of online training, but acknowledgement that a blend of in-house and online might be the answer. That being said, the training plan was relatively well populated with attenders. As would be apparent later on the agenda, this was an important issue as an annual corporate statement of training and development for Governors and governance staff was proposed under the FE White Paper.

It was felt that most governors did have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and the College and pointed to the in-depth review of self-assessment every year.

The performance of student governors this year was vastly improved and left as an action point to ensure that sustainability of that performance. The use of teams to engage had helped.

It was felt that the requirements of the Code of Good Governance were mostly met and that action points, which were known in advance, around the need to develop external membership on the Lakes College Enterprises Board were the key to improving governance. The clerk was actively working on this.

It was noted that the annual 'community' summary of the previous year performance had been adversely affected by lack of resources occasioned by the pandemic (nevertheless there was a full annual report published on the website and therefore requirements were met). However, the Clerk felt that it was a useful exercise to demonstrate engagement with the community and would request to reintroduce for the following year.

Arising from the Office for Students, was a request to 'consider' (not necessarily to appoint) a special independent governor, whose role it would be to give a backbench view of Board performance and carry out the Chair's appraisal. In the course of discussion, it was felt that the college sector had the Search and Governance Committee (which the HE sector may not), which fulfilled a good part of the role. However, there was an attractiveness to some of the proposed elements, and this being the case, the Clerk would consider how some elements could be combined with existing roles for the Committee to consider.

Continuing to the standing orders, some minor amendments had been made and the Committee were happy to recommend them to the Board. However, there may be further changes given the discussion around the Special Independent Governor as above.

The Clerk discussed diary matters for the autumn term. There was collective agreement that Governors' engagement in the self-assessment process was useful, but that it was too onerous in one meeting and that it might be reshaped. The business support challenge session had worked well.

Following discussion with the Deputy Principal, the Clerk put forward the suggestion that there should be more meetings with smaller numbers of Governors around sector interests for the curriculum self-assessment. Where there were issues arising, these could be drawn to the attention of the wider Board. To ease deadlines for staff and avoid congestion on the Board agenda, it was felt that to put in an extra single item Board to approve the final self-assessment coupled with the strategy session usually held in December, that this would help resolve the situation. The Committee thought this to be a sensible session and the Clerk undertook to reflect this in the autumn diary.

The Committee continued to consider the emerging themes around Governance of the FE White Paper, which included training and development of Governors; the Governance Professional and the Chair; and more explicit requirements around self-assessment and external review. The Committee was not keen on the notion of remuneration of the Chair under the proposals. The Clerk noted that a governance maturity matrix was under development which it was hoped to link to the AoC Code.

In respect of vacancies, it was noted by the Committee that following advertisement on online sites (and no response) that there would be an advertisement placed in the local media (noting that an advertisement for Governor was a different prospect to those who might be actively looking for work). In the interim, however, a cold call expressing interest had been received from a potentially strong candidate and the Clerk was expecting an application shortly.

In respect of re-appointments, it was noted that there were five terms of office coming to an end this year, and the Committee noted that they understood best practice guidance, but that provided there was regular refresh to the Board, they were equally as keen that the requisite skills were in place.

Considering the first term of office, the Clerk requested whether the Committee would be content to request the Board to re-appoint Phil Jardine to the Board, which they were content to do, noting his knowledge of the sector and the local operating environment.

**Agreed** – to recommend to the Board the re-appointment of Phil Jardine for a 3<sup>rd</sup> term of office.

*Michael Priestley left the meeting*

The remaining committee considered the re-appointment of Michael Priestley, which they were content to do so, noting his expertise and experience in working with young people over many years, and his interest in the curriculum and outcomes.

**Agreed** – to recommend to the Board the re-appointment of Michael Priestley.

The Chair of the Committee noted that she had been a governor for over twenty years and she would be quite happy to step down at the time of her re-appointment if the length of her appointment was to cause any issues.

**The meeting closed at 1715h.**