

Part A Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 5 April 2022 at 1pm via MS Teams

Present Erika Stoddart (Chair) Walter Leschenko, Mark Smith, Jim Harris, Ann Hardy (CEO), Cain Matthews, Kai Adegbembo and Kerri Harold (all remotely).

In Attendance Steph Rushton, Acting Group Director Finance and Dan Humphrey, Clerk to the Corporation (also remotely)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Liz Parry, Becky Huxley-Binns and Keith Pearson

2. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared; members were reminded to declare any interests as they may arise.

3. Corporation Meeting Minutes January/February 2022

3.1 The minutes of the 17th January, 31st January and 28th February 2022 corporation meetings were agreed and approved. In relation to specific actions; on the 17th January the first action was carried over until the next Corporation meeting, and regarding the 31st January meeting, the Audit Chair confirmed that the second action was not implemented at the latest meeting so should be added to a future agenda of Audit Committee.

RESOLVED: the minutes were approved by Corporation

3.2 It was confirmed that the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of 21st March 2022 regarding the Principal appointment would feature at the next Corporation.

4. Strategic

4.1 Strategic Measures 2021-22 RAG Rated Report & associated 'return to green' report as required

4.1.1 The CEO provided an overview to accompany the report stating:

- Retention is an issue, as students are taking up employment offers, so there is a piece of work trying to retain those who have entered work to finish pieces of work to gain useful qualifications.
- Attendance is also down. At local Principal groups, many colleges are in the same position. Students are struggling to get back into a routine of attendance.
- Apprenticeships; Data needs to be reviewed, but as per the report looking solid.
- We have strong and positive Student Destination data.
- On Student Satisfaction; a fuller update will follow at the next Corporation meeting.
- IOT: additional qualifications have been approved which is very good news.
- PDR rates have increased towards the mid-90% since the report's publication.

4.1.2 Questions:

- A Governor stated that staff costs were discussed yesterday at the Strategic Planning Event as being around 69%, and the question is how do we increase income to reduce that ratio. If income falls and costs increase, this would be difficult, what plans do management have to drive the ratio down?
- The team is pulling together agency staffing costs figures. One issue is growing our own staff and being lean. We will need our accurate management accounts to assist. The Internship Programme happening next year is key to progressing, with Students set to become Teachers.
- It was confirmed that 69% is not as bad as it sounds; many organisations have 70% and above, but an important piece of work to monitor.
- A Governor asked whether casual staff are distinct from agency? There is a concern that casual staff are paid more. The CEO clarified that a higher rate is due to their different holiday position. A Governor noted that we often use casual not agency which may lead to the staffing costs provided being inaccurate. He suggests an additional box in the data regarding casual staff to add to transparency of the figures, and the CEO agreed, this can be done.
- A Governor raised retention in particular, stating East Riding College has an issue here. ERC are getting to know the rest of the Partnership. Perhaps GIFHE and S-Tec have a stronger bond. There has been a post-merger review. Yet substantial ERC issues remain regarding morale and staff feeling valued. A Governor suggested an initiative regarding allowing staff to come together and feel valued. The pay gap may widen but also gratitude for pay rises. There remains work to be done here, the staff need to get to know the new CEO.
- A Governor suggested a need to clarify data in the report, to give more context by adding a narrative and/or further background in the reports. The CEO said she has in discussions with other Principals who have seen their data drop more significantly than ours, and noted that our staff are doing a fantastic job regarding attendance. It was agreed to add more context. A Governor gave examples that sometimes when data is red, it's only just red, sometimes green can actually be worse, so context is then key. Also we need to market our positive elements more. The CEO agreed; for example the Social Media usage by the Partnership could be more upbeat. A Governor also suggested increased innovation, i.e. how we change, not just financially, as good work can go missing. If we capture more good work, staff then feel more valued.
- The Chair stated that an idea is to put out a regular newsletter as Ann used to do in Scarborough. Increased communications, are important to consider how we get positive messages and recognition out. Post-Covid companies are seeing lots of suffering and fatigue, so we need to ask staff how they want to hear from us. It was noted that the Corporation was recommending that we review how we communicate more effectively with staff across the group.
- A Governor noted that we can be more 'glass half full' rather than 'glass half empty'. Communication is all about timing. So far six weeks into having a new CEO, plus two new bright fresh Principals joining us, it is a great chance to relaunch these positives. To take a dynamic approach, while a realistic approach. We can relaunch our messages of a positive future, with great people on board with the Partnership.

- A Governor stated how we have integrated ERC into the Partnership has been very practical, but do not recall a focus on the cultural aspects. A group integration plan or strategy would be good, and to review how it is going, via for example the Staff Survey in June. Let us realise that we are doing remarkably well, and let's tell the staff this.
- The Chair commented that we should put this into the annual plan, and each individual board can contribute underneath. A Governor also raised a query regarding staff satisfaction. The work experience statistics at page 19 have ERC with a low amount 58%, why? The CEO noted that there has been a problem with obtaining placements, to be reviewed in the next survey.
- A Governor asked a question regarding staffing and turnover in Finance department; SR confirmed she has recently taken a proposed structure to EMT; in process of assessing the Management Accounts Teams, and some vacancies are to be advertised imminently. The Chair noted that some of our recent Business graduates may now be available?
- The Chair summarised the debate as focusing on Communication, Strategic Planning, actions at Boards, and positive messages to staff.

RESOLVED: to note the report, with the suggested addition of casual staff data going forward.

4.2 CEO update on Initiatives and Projects

- 4.2.1 The CEO referred to the report and also stated that we were delighted to welcome the Skills Minister to campus. In terms of the bids referred to there is a tight turnaround as bid work starts this week. The recruitment table is a little worrying with more marketing to be done. HE is a key area of concern. The Chair queried whether this is a blip or more permanent, and the CEO stated it is likely too early to tell.

A Governor noted that in a recent meeting with the local MP for Grimsby, on grants, she said GIFHE is one of lowest bidders for FE grants. Are we applying for everything that we can? The CEO thinks we have been really good and will ask MP to clarify at forthcoming meeting regarding which missed opportunities she was referring to.

- 4.2.2 A Governor noted recruitment itself can be tricky, also that when you recruit staff, if you do not then get the student numbers, this leaves you potentially in a problem situation. The CEO stated that HE numbers are worrying and could have a significant impact. The Chair noted that there is a tipping point regarding student and staff. Governors agreed; this is unpleasant and is happening elsewhere.

RESOLVED: to note the report

5. Strategic Planning Event Recommendations (SPE) (verbal)

The Chair noted that the event has been part-completed due to Covid-19 concerns meaning it was switched from in-person to remotely at late notice. As a result we can only give part-feedback at this stage as follows:

The speakers were very good, and there was a good level of attendance.

After hearing from the speakers, virtual breakout rooms were used to discuss some big ticket items including Sustainability, Capital Projects, Digital and Staffing.

The CEO noted one particularly useful suggestion to link risk and opportunity together.

A Governor noted a recurring theme of staff wellbeing, and the Chair agreed that people strategy needs to go beyond pay. A Governor suggested a stakeholder management exercise, seeking to involve people. He noted the move from 4 key elements towards 5 key elements; learner success culture financial security reputation and innovation; innovation being a new distinct category.

It was proposed that a concluding part of the event be arranged shortly prior to the final Corporation of the academic year.

RESOLVED: to note the verbal update and take the SPE findings into the annual and 3 year plan accordingly upon completion of the SPE part II

6. Annual Safeguarding Report 2020.21 and Safeguarding Policy

6.1 The CEO presented the report, noting a degree of overlap with yesterday's presentation at the SPE.

6.2 A Governor was concerned that percentages do not focus on who has not completed questionnaires. It would be nice to get 100% completion, but otherwise a very good report. A Governor said the report paints a good picture. There does not appear to be a major problem, and nothing going on leading to dismissals for example. Let us change our mindset to do more good things. The Chair added that sexual harassment and exploitation is a big issue. Social media can make it difficult regarding bullying to retain evidence.

6.3 The Clerk clarified who currently takes responsibility from the Executive Management Team now the GIFHE Principal role is awaiting its new incumbent, and the CEO confirmed she will retain responsibility regarding Safeguarding.

RESOLVED: to note the report and approve the amended policy

7.1 Finance Update

7.1.1 The Acting Group Director (SR) presented a brief paper on the Management Accounts, noting that there are some things to iron out but that we are not expecting a loss.

We sit comfortably in relation to the Santander ratios in the covenants. At the end of March 2022, the Partnership has a cash balance of £11.6 million. Today; post-March salaries = £10 million, the bottom of our dip. Cash is very comfortable. We are also awaiting Lady Edith Drive sales income. This may necessitate a Treasury Management discussion, whether it is timely to pay off loans, and/or consider possible investments. Similarly, there are issues about pursuing greener options, whether we can afford to spend more upon these.

The Finance Team has an improving situation on invoices. Only 35 pre-February invoices remaining. Sometimes had been incorrectly addressed, for instance to GIFHE or ERC instead of to the Partnership. We are also awaiting the consultant's process review report. An action plan is imminent with 27 points within it.

7.1.2 Questions

- How are reserves currently invested? SR: we have a business reserves account.
- Do we need a conversation about investing in sites, otherwise funds just sit there? There are two issues here, we need a reserves policy about how much to keep in reserves, and also

risk analysis as ultra low rates mean it has not been an issue but the changing economic situation means now they are.

- Is there any scope to buy land? It was agreed we need to identify sites first. We also need to work upon those part of campus which look tired.
- Governors noted a reputational impact of being slow on invoices, and the impact on other suppliers. Hope SR gets all needed support to address this.
- Governors also noted the importance of internal and external audit tenders; we need to look at combination of quality of work and the costs. It may mean increased costs to retain quality. The Chair anticipates an External Audit cost increase. A Governor noted similar points as above. Innovative ways to bank or use of funds may be needed, but we are in a healthy position plus lots of projects on the horizon.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

8. Annual Legal report 2020/21

With the relevant officer on annual leave, the CEO provided a brief overview, noting that the report included no significant concerns.

RESOLVED: to note the report

9. Governance

9.1 The Clerk provided a verbal update noting that:

- The SPE was a success as per the agenda item #5 discussed above
- It was confirmed that WL is attending one more Corporation meeting then is resigning from his role as Chair of Audit.
- Edward Asquith has resigned from the S-Tec Board
- A new GIFHE Chair has been successfully identified and interviewed, with an appointment imminent.
- We hope to formally finalise an appointment a new governor to the GIFHE Board, Tracy Todd in Any Other Business below.

RESOLVED: Members thanked departed governors for their service and noted the verbal report.

9.2 An issue arising from the recent MODAL committee concerns their status as a Board or a Committee. A brief discussion followed regarding the advantages and disadvantages of either status. MODAL is currently designated as a Committee but seeks to become a Board. The Chair moved a proposal to action this and members voted in favour of it being changed to a Board accordingly.

RESOLVED: It was resolved to rename the MODAL Committee to the MODAL Board

10. Draft minutes of meetings

A number of draft minutes were provided. Some had been uploaded very recently but all had been agreed as a true record by the relevant Chair in each instance.

RESOLVED: to approve the Draft Minutes of the meetings as submitted

11. Any other business:

11.1 Appointment of new governor

It was agreed following a verbal report from the Clerk to approve the appointment of Tracy Todd to the GIFHE Board. Tracy had attended and observed a recent GIFHE Board Meeting and brings particular experience in equalities diversion and inclusion.

RESOLVED: to appoint Tracy Todd as a GIFHE Board Governor for a 4 year term from 4 April 2022

11.2 KA queried at the request of the S-Tec Board, the issue of where Health and Safety issues fit in terms of accountability and the Chair confirmed that lies with Corporation primarily. The Health and Safety Executive would refer any issues to Corporation. The Chair further confirmed that any H&S issues from staff should be raised at Principal level initially.

A Governor recommended taking an increased digital approach to H&S. The CEO confirmed that while ERC and S-Tec are digital in this regard, GIFHE needs to become more digital, as it operates a current dual system.

11.3 WL stated his final Corporation meeting before stepping down would be 17th May, and volunteered to have a handover with his successor prior to the next Audit meeting after then.

12. Date and time of next meetings:

- a) Tuesday 17th May 2022 at 4pm
- b) Tuesday 5th July 2022 at 4pm

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm

Signed _____

Date _____

Chair of the Corporation