

East Coast College Corporation Meeting

Tuesday 17th December 9am Energy Centre Lowestoft Campus

Present:	David Blake (Chair - DB) Tina Ellis (Vice Chair and ECETA Chair TE) Giles Kerkham (Audit Chair GK) Mike Dowdall (MD) Paul Padda (Principal and CEO) Madeleine Moretta (MM) Katie Alexander (KA) Ian Lomax (Finance & General Purposes Chair IL) Vicki Paterson (VP) Kirk Lower (Vice Chair KL) Robin Jackson (RJ) Mark Buckton (MB) Andy Tovell (AT) Logan-Jaimes Gravells (LG) Maisy Clark (MC) Emily Harvey (EH) and on Teams Teresa Sharman (TS)	
In attendance:	Wendy Stanger (Director of Governance), Ann Wall (Director of People and Wellbeing), Urmila Rasan (Deputy Chief Executive) Gary Jefferson (Deputy Principal), and for Item 5 Tim O'Connor Partner Scrutton Bland on Teams	
ECC/24/12/1	Apologies and membership	Action
<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from Rachel Kirk (RK) Peter Lavender (PL) Graham Evans (GE) Jude Owens (JO) and Lynne Doublet (LD)</p> <p>Membership</p> <p>Tina Ellis (TE) Peter Lavender (PL) Mike Dowdall (MD) Giles Kerkham (GK) David Blake (Chair - DB) Kirk Lower (KL) Ian Lomax (IL) Jude Owens (JO) Teresa Sharman (TS) Rachel Kirk (RK) Vicki Paterson (VP) Graham Evans (GE) Katie Alexander (KA) Logan-Jaimes Gravells (LG) Madeleine Moretta (MM) Lynne Doublet (LD) Robin Jackson (RJ) Mark Buckton (MB) Andy Tovell (AT) Maisy Clark (MC) Emily Harvey (EH) Paul Padda (Principal and CEO)</p> <p>Mark Buckton (MB) Andy Tovell (AT) Maisy Clark (MC) and Emily Harvey (EH) were welcomed to their first Board meeting and introductions were made.</p> <p>Thanks, were noted to Jude Owens (JO), who was stepping down as governor at the end of the academic year.</p>		
ECC/24/12/2	Declarations of Interest	
<p>There were the following declarations of interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tina Ellis as ECETA Chair and as a Governor at an Ormiston School. <p>It was agreed that these declarations did not preclude full participation in the meeting.</p>		
ECC/24/12/3	To approve the Minutes of the last meetings 5 11 24 and any other matters raised previously not otherwise included in the Agenda.	
<p>The minutes of 5 11 24 including confidential ones were approved as a true record of the meeting.</p>		
ECC/24/12/4	Rolling Action Log	
<p>The rolling action log was reviewed and the updates were noted. It was agreed the subcontracting action could be closed as the report on the agenda at item 8.3 covered it.</p>		

	It was noted that the Government was looking to expand devolution and make changes to local government. Close engagement was required to ensure the College was involved in adult and skills planning decisions.	
ECC/24/12/5	External Audit Presentation of Annual Accounts	
	<p>External Audit presented the audit findings and accounts. The Audit was a very positive process due to the improvement in preparation, systems, and records and this was thanks to the College's finance team and in particular the Head and Deputy Head of Finance.</p> <p>The findings were as presented to the joint Audit and Finance and General Purposes Committee and were an unmodified and clean opinion on both the ECC Group and ECETA's accounts. The accounts demonstrated a strong set of results with increased income at the group level largely due to project income with only a small increase in expenditure and therefore an increased surplus. The balance sheet and cash holdings were strong helped in part by the release of the deferred income. The Management Letter included two recommendations only and a follow-up on the previous year's recommendations which were both in progress. The Letter of Representation was largely standard and contained the required representations and the adjusted and unadjusted items.</p> <p>ECETA's accounts demonstrated a positive year with increased profit. Costs though had increased including the recharge from the College. The audit findings had all been agreed and action taken.</p> <p>The Audit Chair advised that the joint meeting of the Audit and Finance and General Purposes Committees had worked well. It was pleasing to see the improvement that the College had made in terms of systems and processes that resulted in the positive audit.</p> <p>The Board recorded thanks to Tim O'Connor Audit Partner and wished him a happy retirement.</p>	
ECC/24/12/6	Annual 2023/24 Audit Committee Report to the Board	
	<p>The Audit Chair presented the Committee's annual report. This Committee's opinion in the report was reflected in the Annual Accounts and the report provided the Board with a summary of the assurance the Audit Committee had considered to reach this conclusion. The Committee had concluded that:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Audit Committee's opinion is that the adequacy and effectiveness of the corporation's assurance arrangements, framework of governance, risk management, and control processes for the effective and efficient use of resources, solvency, and the safeguarding of assets during 2023/24 were effective.</i></p> <p>The Board reviewed the audit committee's annual report and the assurance given to the Board.</p> <p>The Director of Governance advised that the Committee's annual report was submitted to the ESFA with the Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023/24 by the end of December.</p>	
ECC/24/12/7	Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023/24	
ECC/24/12/7.1	East Coast College Audit Findings - Management Letter and Letter of Representation	
	The Board considered the Management Letter and Letter of Representation.	

	Governors queried how progress on recommendations was monitored. The Audit Chair advised that the Committee received an Audit Finding Action Log at each meeting with progress on actions, and this included actions from all audits.	
ECC/24/12/7.2	College Group Accounts Year ended 31 July 2024	
	<p>The Chair commented that the Accounts showed a very positive year but that the increased income was mainly due to non-recurring project income. This year the College's project income was reduced and reductions in recruitment in areas such as apprenticeships, HE, and maritime may mean that difficult decisions will need to be taken.</p> <p>Governors discussed that the College's reserves had increased and that it currently did not have a formal reserves policy. The Finance and General Purposes Committee Chair advised that a draft Reserves Policy was to be considered at the next Committee (March 2024). It was agreed that the policy needed to consider the maximum and minimum level of reserves and that there needed to be reasoning for a high level of reserves when these monies could be invested in the student experience.</p> <p>The Director of Governance advised that the Group Accounts would be published on the College's website.</p> <p>The Corporation resolved to approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Coast College Group Annual Report and Financial Statements Year ended 31 July 2024 and that they and the related documents be signed by the Chair on the Board's behalf. 	
ECC/24/12/7.3	ECETA Annual Accounts Year ended 31 July 2024 (as approved by ECETA Board on 11 12 24)	
	<p>The Director of Governance advised that the ECETA Accounts, which are part of the College's group accounts, were approved by the ECETA Board at their December meeting.</p> <p>The ECETA Chair advised that it had been another positive year and that ECETA was to produce a narrative annual report to set out what had been achieved.</p>	
ECC/24/12/7.4	Extracts from the Finance Record	
	The Deputy Chief Executive presented the College's Financial Forecasting Return extracts which demonstrated the College was assessed as good for financial health. The data for the return is taken from the Annual Accounts 2023/24.	
ECC/24/12/8	Principal and CEO Report	
	<p>The Principal presented the report and advised that the College was still celebrating the Ofsted outcomes which had been an emotional and uplifting experience.</p> <p>Governors discussed the current recruitment position and the challenges that this could mean for the College's finances. The Principal advised that the performance management meetings currently in progress were reviewing each area's position and the outcomes of these would be reflected in the mid-year forecast. The 16-18 recruitment had exceeded allocation but other areas had underrecruited.</p> <p>Governors challenged the reasons for low recruitment in apprenticeship and the basis of the recruitment plan. The Principal commented that this was being reviewed in detail at the performance management meetings. There had been some previous reputational issues that had been addressed, businesses in key recruitment areas were not recruiting apprentices and</p>	

	<p>there had been competition. It was too soon to tell if the NI increase would have a further detrimental effect. The curriculum plan had been based on historical data.</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive commented that the historical 5 year recruitment trend data on which the curriculum plan had been based had seen consistent recruitment.</p> <p>The student governors commented that there was a need to improve school career advice and guidance around college including apprenticeships and to start this guidance at an earlier stage. Better school advice and guidance would also help with future recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Governors noted that the College's research project on attrition had identified as an issue the lack of quality career advice and guidance.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal commented the College's employers were mainly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which meant it was harder to sign up apprentices as it was a commitment for the SMEs to take on.</p> <p>The Governors acknowledged the national challenges in apprenticeship recruitment and discussed the proposed changes to apprenticeship programmes. They also considered the government's housing building targets and how these initiatives could present growth opportunities for the College.</p>	
ECC/24/12/8.1	Ofsted (Confidential until published)	
ECC/24/12/8.2	Ofsted - congratulations email	
	<p>The Principal confirmed the Ofsted outcomes, the college has achieved a good overall with all aspects and provision types including apprenticeships graded as good. The skills contribution judgement was judged as reasonable although inspectors noted that we were very close to a strong. In the end, the College team was disappointed not to have achieved a strong skills judgment, and outstanding for high needs. He thanked the Deputy Principal and the Director for Commercial, Projects, and Community for their excellent work as nominee and skills nominee.</p> <p>The Chair commented that the Ofsted outcome demonstrated the fantastic work of Team ECC and this was evident throughout the inspection.</p> <p>The Principal commented that it had been a gruelling but rewarding couple of weeks which brought out what is best about the College and its great team dynamic. He thanked the Board for their support, advice, and encouragement during the inspection.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal advised that there was nothing like an Ofsted inspection for team building. The spirit and hard work of all was a testament to the ECC family. The managers all attended the nightly meeting, were on message and all actioned what was required following the feedback.</p> <p>Governors commented that making sure everyone played their part was a testament to the College's senior team's leadership and support. It is fantastic to have the College's work recognised as a good College and puts us on track for outstanding and allows the time to achieve it.</p> <p>The Ofsted governor team commented that they had been impressed by the calmness of the College team and their obvious passion for the College. It was great to be able to be part of the inspection and to help demonstrate how proud we are of the College. They thanked the Director of Governance for her support and advice during the inspection.</p> <p>The ECETA Chair commented that the skills judgement also considered how the College's commercial and project work supported the College in meeting skills needs.</p>	

<p>Governors commented that after celebrating we need to look at those areas identified as needing improvement and continue to work to improve. The Deputy Principal commented that now that we have achieved good we have the luxury of time to address improving these areas.</p> <p>The Principal commented that the area the College had been concerned about most before the inspection was apprenticeships. The inspector saw good learning in all areas visited and acknowledged that we had effectively addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection.</p> <p>The Governors noted that the Ofsted inspection compared our performance to other colleges and judged on this basis. In contrast, our self-assessments tended to judge more critically, reflecting our high aspirations for continuous improvement.</p> <p>The Director of People and Wellbeing commented that the Ofsted inspection was the greatest example of Team ECC ever seen and that the result would help staff retention and recruitment.</p> <p>Governors queried if the Ofsted approach had changed. The Deputy Principal advised that it had been a more supportive approach with the Lead Inspector checking on the team's wellbeing.</p> <p>A staff governor who had been heavily involved in the inspection's deep dives commented that it had been a tiring but enjoyable experience. The inspector had been supportive and she had been proud to show how good the College is.</p> <p>Governors noted thanks to Team ECC for all their work and commitment during Ofsted and congratulated them all on the great result.</p>		
<p>ECC/24/12/8.3</p>	<p>Sub-Contracting - Quality Assurance and tendering</p>	
<p>The Principal presented the report and advised on the current position regarding subcontractors.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal advised that Inspire Suffolk had not yet commenced and that as the Kings Trust model is no longer a delivery option (national reductions) a new programme has been proposed to target NEET and unemployed adults. As this was not a Kings Trust Programme the management charge could be the College's standard 20%. A governor advised that due to reduced funding, the Kings Trust had withdrawn from the region and was now concentrated in certain geographic areas only.</p> <p>Governors discussed St Eds and noted that the OFSTED deep dive confirmed there is good practice in all aspects, with clear support to learners. The Principal advised that St Eds had recruited to plan and was looking to request an increase in year allocation. They had previously recruited in year to target NEET provision within the Norwich area. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that ESFA approval was required and this would be lagged funding.</p> <p>Governors commented that there was a clear need for provision to target NEET and unemployed adults and the proposals were positive ones.</p> <p>The Corporation noted the management and quality assurance report on sub-contractors and approved</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. St Eds to increase their Study programme allocation (and ECC 16-18 numbers) and to apply for ESFA approval for an additional 30 study programme learners for 2024/2025 with study to be completed by July 25). 2. A reduction in the St Eds management fee from 25% to 20% for the additional 30 study programme learners acknowledging the stronger performance on term 1 (2024/25) 	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. St Eds and ACE to be approved for ASF (Adult Skills Fund) to work with 19-24 unemployed young people around developing employability skills/ supporting parents with their children who have barriers to study or engagement. This would be a maximum of £25,000 in total. 4. Approve that SMG request ESFA for additional subcontracting utilising Adults Skills funding for 2024/25. 5. Agree to the issue of a tender document for the sub-contracted provision 2025/26 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Performing Arts level 3 o 16-18 NEET and SEN provision in Great Yarmouth o 16-18 NEET and SEN provision in Norwich o 16-18 NEET and SEN provision in Lowestoft o Adult offer for Norfolk (19-24) o Adult offer for Suffolk 6. Change in Inspire delivery model to target NEET and unemployed adults with stepping stones into progression pathways. 	
ECC/24/12/8.4	KPIs	
	<p>The Principal presented the KPIs and advised the Board on the RAG ratings. The RAG was based on performance against the College's target. 16-18 recruitment had grown and the College was looking to continue this growth. Apprenticeship and HE recruitment were down and as mentioned the financial effect and reasons for this were being reviewed and would be reflected in the mid-year forecast. It was important to minimise the income loss that current HE learners were retained and that apprentices achieved.</p> <p>The Chair commented that the reduction in apprenticeship and HE recruitment would mean a material income reduction in this and future years due to the length of these programmes and this would need to be managed.</p> <p>Governors noted that staff vacancies and absences were higher than target and that agency staff costs were high. The Director of People and Wellbeing advised that absences had been affected by operations and that the use of agency staff could also affect the quality of the College's offer. The Board's decision on this year's pay review will impact staff recruitment and retention, making it a factor to consider in these deliberations. Fixed term contracts had been used to recruit for English and maths teachers due to this year's increased student cohort but this had meant they were hard to recruit and the College was therefore looking to change this.</p>	
ECC/24/12/9	Strategic Risk Register	
	The Strategic Risk Register was noted.	
ECC/24/12/10	Management Accounts - October	
	<p>The Deputy Chief Executive presented the management accounts. These did not reflect the annual accounts adjustments but had been updated for maritime.</p> <p>The student governors Logan-Jaimes Gravells (LG) Maisy Clark (MC) and Emily Harvey (EH) left the meeting as they had a lesson to attend.</p>	

ECC/24/12/11	Mid-Year Forecast - Postponed	
The Board noted that this had been postponed.		
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]		
ECC/24/12/13	Governance Update	
<p>The Director of Governance presented the update and advised that recruitment had commenced for a new Chair of the People Committee.</p> <p>Corporation noted the use of the College Seal on the document agreed at the November Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Place University of Suffolk (UoS) Sub-Lease • Lowestoft Tower Contract Deed • Great Yarmouth Rebuild – Legal Documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clawback Agreement and Legal Charge • Lease with Ormiston Academies Trust and Norfolk County Council <p>Corporation and the Senior Team noted thanks to Jude Owens for her work and commitment during her time as governor and People Chair and to the Ofsted Governor Team.</p> <p>Corporation resolved to appoint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vicki Paterson as a member of the People Committee <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirk Lower as Chair and Tina Ellis as Vice Chair of the People Committee on a temporary basis. 		
Committee Reports for Information		
ECC/24/12/14	Finance and General Purposes Committee Report	
The Finance and General Purposes Chair presented the report and advised on the items discussed and the committee's recommendation to the Board.		

	Resolutions recommended by committees on which no discussion is anticipated	
ECC/24/12/14.1	Cleaning Contract Extension	
<p>Corporation resolved, as recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the cleaning contract with Pendergate T/A Kindred for the optional one-year period from 14th February 2025. 		
	Report from Committee for information on which no discussion is anticipated	
ECC/24/12/14.2	Health and Safety Annual Report	
<p>The Finance and General Purposes Chair, who is also the Board's Health and Safety Link presented the report. The report was a positive one with the normal spike of incidents being in term one and the only concern being the amount of staff engagement with the College's Health and Safety Committee.</p> <p>Governors noted that given the nature of the College's provision incidents were low and queried if there was underreporting of incidents and near misses. They had though observed during visits that health and safety protocols were being effectively implemented, and the students demonstrated a good understanding of the requirements.</p> <p>Governors agreed the following action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low level of incidents and near misses to be discussed with the College's Health and Safety team to assess whether this was due to underreporting. 		IL
	Report from Committee for information on which no discussion is anticipated	
ECC/24/12/14.3	Annual Committee Report	
Corporation noted the Finance and General Purposes Committee annual report and agreed to its publication		
ECC/24/12/15	Audit Committee Report	
<p>The Audit Chair presented the report and highlighted the College's work on cybersecurity and the need to be constantly vigilant. The positive Funding Assurance Audit demonstrated significant improvement from the last report with the auditor concluding that the College had substantially met contractual requirements and returned materially accurate data to the ESFA (materiality being based on an overall error rate of 5%).</p>		
	Resolutions recommended by committees on which no discussion is anticipated	
ECC/24/12/15.1	External Audit Contract as recommended by Audit Committee (taken after agenda item 7)	

	<p>Governors discussed the performance of the external auditors. Performance was good and there was a positive working relationship.</p> <p>The Audit Chair presented the report on the contract extension and the reasoning for the Audit Committee recommending an initial one-year extension.</p> <p>The Director of Governance reported that she and the Deputy Chief Executive had met with the new partner, whose CV was included as an appendix to the report. They had advised that the firm was committed to the sector and that the College's team, apart from the partner, would not change.</p> <p>Corporation resolved that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • due to the change in partner and ownership/control, the contract with SB Audit LLP (now part of the Sumer Group) be extended for an initial 1 year only with a decision on the additional 2 years option to be made at the end of the 2024/25 audit. (This is subject to satisfactory discussions between the Deputy Chief Executive and SB Audit LLP regarding a reduction in the number of days per year and consequent costs.) 	
	<p>Policies recommended by Committees on which no discussion is anticipated</p>	
<p>ECC/24/12/15.2</p>	<p>QD125 Freedom of Information Policy & Procedure</p>	
	<p>Corporation resolved to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adopt QD125 Freedom of Information Policy & Procedure as recommended by Audit Committee. 	
<p>ECC/24/12/16</p>	<p>People Committee - Policies and Annual Report from the postponed meeting</p>	
<p>ECC/24/12/16.1</p>	<p>Annual People Report</p>	
	<p>The Director of People and Wellbeing presented the Annual People Report. The College had a good year in terms of staff wellbeing and professional learning. Absence rates were still a challenge, but efforts to support staff and maintain strong union relationships have been effective. The professional learning offer had been well received, with a strong focus on SEND and inclusive practice as well as subject specific training and development. Staff engagement in the year had been strong and this had been supported by the Staff Engagement Ambassadors. 85% of staff participated in the recent staff survey and 87% of staff would recommend the College as an employer. Recruitment continued to be challenging but was helped by the pay award.</p> <p>Governors discussed the level and reasons for absence and it was noted that absence due to mental health was never related to just one issue. The College was proactive in providing support and taking positive action such as providing support through the ATPs, reducing workloads and simplifying systems.</p>	
<p>ECC/24/12/16.2</p>	<p>People Policies</p> <p>QD078 Sickness Absence Policy, QD203 - Sexual Harassment Policy, QD201 Flexible working policy, and QD079 Staff Code of Conduct</p>	

	<p>The Director of People and Wellbeing updated the Board on the changes to the policies and the introduction of the new Sexual Harassment Policy.</p> <p>The Director of Governance advised that mandatory training for staff on sexual harassment was taking place and a governor training session in conjunction with another college had been arranged for governors.</p> <p>Governors challenged what would happen if a member of staff refused to undertake a drug or alcohol test or if they did not inform the College about a matter that would be identified on a DBS. The Director of People and Wellbeing advised that the member of staff would be subject to an investigation and it would be seen as bringing the college into disrepute.</p> <p>Corporation resolved to adopt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QD078 Sickness Absence Policy • QD203 - Sexual Harassment Policy • QD201 Flexible working policy and • QD079 Staff Code of Conduct 	
ECC/24/12/16.3	QD105 Equality Diversity Inclusion and Belonging Policy (and recommended for approval by Quality and Curriculum)	
	<p>Corporation resolved to adopt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QD105 Equality Diversity Inclusion and Belonging Policy. 	
ECC/24/12/17	ECETA Report	
	<p>The ECETA Report was noted and the ECETA Chair advised that it had been a positive year. An additional Board meeting was to be held in January to cover business deferred from the December meeting which had been shortened due to Ofsted.</p>	
	Confidential Independent Governors Only	
ECC/24/12/18	Governance Remuneration and Search Committee Report	
	<p>The Governance Remuneration and Search Report was noted.</p>	
	Resolutions recommended by committees on which no discussion is anticipated	
ECC/24/12/18.1	Annual Senior Post Holder (SPH) Report	
	<p>The Director of Governance presented the report and advised that the report was required due to the Board's adoption of the SPH Remuneration Code. The report is based on the format used in previous years with full transparency of Senior Post Holder remuneration. Due to the change in postholders, the figures for the CEO and Principal include an amalgamation of those in post in the year.</p> <p>Corporation resolved to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the Annual Senior Post Holder report and approve its publication and removal of the historical reports. 	

	Resolutions recommended by committees on which no discussion is anticipated	
ECC/24/12/18.2	Independent Governors only - Director of Governance Objectives	
Corporation resolved to		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the Director of Governance Objectives. 		
	Resolutions recommended by committees on which no discussion is anticipated	
ECC/24/12/18.3	Independent Governors only - Principal and CEO Six Month Review	
Corporation resolved to		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the Principal and CEO Six Month Review. 		
	Policies recommended by committees on which no discussion is anticipated	
ECC/24/12/18.4	QD158 Senior Post Holder Remuneration and Appraisal Policy	
Corporation resolved to		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the QD158 Senior Post Holder Remuneration and Appraisal Policy. 		
ECC/24/12/20	Review of meeting	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confidential Items: 8. Ofsted until final report published, 12. Maritime 2. Were Learners prominent in discussions: A focus of the meeting including the Ofsted discussion. It was great to have student governors in attendance. 3. Risk Management: any issues discussed which may require an additional Assessment: None 4. Equality & Diversity: any issues discussed which may require an additional Impact Assessment: NEET provision 5. Health & Safety: any issues discussed which may require an additional Impact Assessment: Annual report and question to be raised re reporting levels. 6. Sustainability: any issues discussed which may require an additional Impact Assessment: None 7. Media: any issues discussed to inform local media: Ofsted once report published 8. How did the meeting go: A really positive and celebratory end of year meeting. 		
ECC/24/12/19	Presentation of College Fellow	
The Board presented Peter Aldous with a College Fellow for his Services to supporting Education and the College.		