

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE
15 FEBRUARY 2023**

PRESENT: P Lynn (CG and Vice Chair – Chairing the Meeting), R Davies (CG), Z Lewis (Principal).

H Bonner (Higher Education Student Rep), Z Foster (Head of Governance) B Robinson (Deputy Principal), O Rodley (Vice Principal), and P Stone (Director of Higher Education).

KEY: CG – College Governor

1. Apologies for Absence – M McClintock (CG and Chair of Committee)

Introductions were made for this first meeting of the Committee.

2. Declarations of Interest

It was noted that R Davies' daughter was Head of Marketing and PR at the Open University.

3. Terms of Reference for the Committee

Z Foster presented the draft Terms of Reference for the Committee.

After consideration, it was **agreed** to add that the Terms of Reference would have a three year review and that they would be recommended for approval by the Governing Body in March 2023. Additionally, in the first instance they would be reviewed at the next meeting (2024) to ensure they were fit for purpose.

4. Principal's Verbal Overview and Risk Summary

Z Lewis gave a comprehensive overview of the background to Higher Education (HE) within the Further Education sector including the anticipated reform of HE with the Auger Review recommendations which had not been fully realised within the Government agenda and the College's own HE history which had resulted in the current partnership with the Open University.

The extensive regulation of the HE sector was discussed as were the lack of current opportunities for development beyond the Institute of Technology (IoT).

Z Lewis assured the Committee that the College was making opportunities where they presented themselves; was limiting the damage of Covid and the extensive regulation regime, whilst bidding time for the demographic upturn coming through.

Further discussion of key risks included: the complications of the new accountabilities which did not favour further education; the TEF regrading process which was now more difficult for colleges to achieve; the linkage of national Level 3 changes and the impact on progression into HE; the local HE landscape within colleges; destinations and outcomes; and the overarching complexities and difficulties in recruiting and retaining high quality staff.

5. 5.1 Higher Education Update

P Stone took the Committee through his detailed report highlighting: the hefty revalidation cycle; two new awards coming through; workforce challenges; IoT targets; and the effect of Covid on HE nationally and locally.

H Bonner gave a brief summary of how the HE faculty had responded positively to students during the Covid period.

Discussion and questions included: the return to onsite delivery nationally and locally; local IoT progress; the lack of national rate figures and the new B3 data measures from the OfS (to which P Stone detailed the College position); the TEF submission and expectations; and IoT relicensing and related factors both national and local.

5.2 Student Voice

H Bonner gave background to her HE journey highlighting the flexible nature of the course and individual support allowing her (and other students) to be able to commit to HE study. She drew attention to some staffing issues which had been resolved successfully.

The Committee discussed: staffing including succession planning; the marketing of the flexible nature of the programmes and of direct methods of communication with former Level 3 students to progress future enrolment including the use of student advocates and Talk and Experience days; and sense checking and systematic review of timetabling for HE courses.

An update was received on the University Centre which had been positively received by students albeit with some issues in relation the Café which were discussed.

5.3 HE Strategy

The HE Strategy was presented by P Stone.

The Committee discussed the strategy ensuring that there was direct linkage into the Strategic Plan and further clarification in relation to careers (resulting in an additional bullet point within the plan).

Subject to the minor additions, the Committee **agreed** to recommend the Strategy for approval by the Governing Body at its next meeting on 13 March 2023.

6. Enrolment Numbers

The enrolment numbers were presented.

A short discussion included: acknowledgement of the work on enrolment; possible additional opportunities for Travel and Tourism with a further two companies operating from Leeds/Bradford airport; and higher grades and reasons and associated terminology (teacher assessed grades).

7. Committee Review of Top Risks

Whilst the Committee considered there was no change to the top risks discussed, it was **agreed** that staff recruitment, retention and pay was the single and biggest concern for the HE faculty.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was **agreed** that the Committee would meet annually in the Spring Term (February) or more regularly if necessary.

9. Any other Urgent Business – P Lynn

P Lynn, on behalf of the Committee, gave thanks to the input by H Bonner and wished her well in her studies.

The meeting closed at 2.15pm