

EASTBOURNE
HASTINGS
LEWES
NEWHAVEN



BOARD OF GOVERNORS BRIEFING

EAST SUSSEX COLLEGE GROUP



EAST SUSSEX COLLEGE GROUP BOARD OF GOVERNORS BRIEFING OCTOBER

Welcome to the East Sussex College Group (ESCG) Board Briefing.

The College's governing body is known as the East Sussex College Group Board. We have legal responsibility for the College Group, and our role is to give strategic oversight to the College. Governors do not involve themselves in the day-to-day management of the College. Those responsibilities are fulfilled by the CEO & Principal and her Executive Team. If you haven't already, you can read all about the Governors here [Meet the Governors](#).

To respond to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Board implemented exceptional arrangements, including a weekly 'Board Short-Term Focus Group' consisting of the Chair, Vice-Chairs, Director of Governance and Chairs of key committees, with the Acting CEO. This provided support and challenge to the Executive Team on vital decision making in a highly volatile context.

The Corporation Board met on 21 October 2020 and formally approved the appointment of Rebecca Conroy as the East Sussex College CEO/Principal. The Board felt that at the end of a rigorous and competitive recruitment process, the right decision had been reached and welcomed Rebecca officially.

The meeting opened with an update from the CEO. We heard how students and members of staff have been adjusting to a 'new normal' since the College re-opened in September 2020. Academic continuity planning was described, which assured the Board, that should learning need to be moved online at short notice; this could be done with minimal disruption. It was noted that the College has invested £165k in ensuring the health and safety of everyone on campus. The Board requested assurance that both staff and student wellbeing will remain a priority. The Curriculum and

Standards Committee meets on 16 November 2020 and will receive a full report on planned quality improvements, enrolments, student voice activities and Ofsted Interim visit feedback.

August summary management accounts covering the first month of the new financial year were presented by the Interim Chief Finance Officer (CFO). The College has started the year in a sound financial position, and despite impacts of Covid-19 the College looks to be headed in the right financial direction. A new Finance Director, Helen Tracey, has joined the College to reinforce capacity and competence. An updated budget will be presented to Governors during November, which will reflect the post enrolment position and the full impact of newly announced government funding allocations for Further Education. You can read more about this [here](#).

The Board discussed and approved the [Subcontractor Reduction Strategy](#). The strategy significantly reduces the College's dependency on subcontracted activity in 16-18 and adult provision, as recommended by the Further Education Commissioner. The Chairs of Audit, Risk and Compliance and Finance Committees asked about the risks implicit in reducing subcontracting reliance and asked if bringing training in-house would be financially viable. They requested further assurances be provided, but were in principle supportive of the approach.

The College has recently received £1.82m of [Further Education Capital Allocation](#) to undertake immediate remedial work to upgrade the condition of its 'Category C and below' estate. Over 50% of College buildings in Eastbourne and Lewes fall into this category. The Board approved the proposed use of the fund to enable improvement works.



EAST SUSSEX COLLEGE GROUP BOARD OF GOVERNORS BRIEFING
OCTOBER

The Board discussed and approved the draft ESCG Recovery Plan. The Recovery Plan details improvement measures the College will implement to ensure financial recovery and sustainability and to 'build and grow' delivery. The aim is to better meet the changing economic and social needs of East Sussex in 2020/21 and beyond. The Recovery Plan is the foundation for a number of ESCG plans including the 2021-24 Strategic Plan, Estates Strategy, Adult, HE and Apprenticeship Growth Strategies and the Curriculum Strategy for the College.

Following a recommendation by the Further Education Commissioner, and a recognition by the Executive Team, a new approach to managing risk across the College was presented and approved by the Board. Governors were appraised of 14 of the most significant risks to the College and the mitigations and actions in place against each risk. The governance of East Sussex College Group has been significantly refreshed and re-structured since March 2020. The Director of Governance presented the draft Governance Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The QIP sets out the action necessary to get to good and then outstanding governance against the [Governance Framework](#). Top of the priority list is improving student voice representation on the Board and its Committees, and further streamlining the Committee structure and rebalancing Board/Committee decision making. The Board approved the draft QIP and related processes.

The Board approved revisions to the following College policies:

[Staff and Governor Expenses](#)

[Gifts and Hospitality and Declarations of Interest](#)

[Instrument and Articles](#)

[Scheme of Delegation](#)

[Standing Orders](#)

[Whistleblowing](#)

The Board next meets on 7 December 2020.

If you would like to discuss any aspects of this short briefing, please contact Mia Bryden, Director of Governance at mia.bryden@escg.ac.uk or on 07768335984.

EAST SUSSEX COLLEGE GROUP

BOARD OF GOVERNORS BRIEFING

