

GOVERNORS NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #1 AUTUMN 2022

Following the sad news of the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the DfE has confirmed that schools and colleges will stay open during the 10-day period of national mourning. East Sussex College will be shut on Monday 19th September for the funeral as per DfE advice. To pay our respects, we are flying our flags at half-mast.

AOC GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL PAPER

The Association of Colleges (AoC) is a member organisation set up to support colleges and to lobby government on our behalf. A, regionally based Governor Networks, (comprising Corporation Chairs, the CEO of the AoC and the Network Chair) is embedded within the AoC to share information and best practice, though this has little influence on policy and action by the AoC.

Concerns have recently been raised by Chairs that their interests were not being met through this structure and that the new responsibilities bestowed upon Boards through the Skills and Post 16 Education Act were not being discussed. As a result, a small group of Chairs considered organisational changes to ensure that the Chairs have a voice in determining policy. This has resulted in a consultation paper being developed, which gives greater significance to a Governor's Council, supported by the AoC. We are being asked to respond to this individually or collectively by the end of October 2022.

ONS RECLASSIFICATION OF COLLEGES

The new Skills and Post-16 Education Act (2022) has prompted the ONS to initiate a review of the classification of colleges from its current private sector status to the public sector. Aside from concerns about restrictions or approval requirements on borrowing, capital transactions, leases, indemnities and severance payments, the main concerns are accounting ones:

- A hasty accounting consolidation of college accounts (ie 31st March 2024 rather than 2025).
- A push to bring the college financial year end forward from 31st July to 31 March.
- Officials are clearly looking at lots of options, but we may need to argue strongly that any reporting changes fit with college needs and capacity.

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE

Starting this academic year, we are obligated to carry out an external review of governance every three years, alongside an annual internal review. I met recently with The Vice Chair and Chair of SPR, the CEO and the Director of Governance to consider this and to make plans for a review, potentially culminating in an observed Board meeting in March 2023. We are currently obtaining quotes from suppliers for SPR to consider at its next meeting. The output from our internal review will form the basis of the external review, alongside the soon to be completed Governance Improvement Plan.

ESCG STRATEGY DAY

I am currently working with the CEO and Director of Governance on planning for a Board & Executive Strategy Day later in the Autumn Term. A proposed date will be shared as soon as possible to maximise attendance. The focus for the day will be a refresh of the ESCG Strategy Plan. We will use the day to work in small groups on the Governance Improvement Plan structured around the six strategic plan objectives and the SIOP (Strategic Intentions Operational Plan).

THE YEAR AHEAD

A new parliament with a new cabinet will inevitably bring changes to the world of FE and education in general. This will no doubt bring its challenges both to revenue and capital funding, but I believe that we are well placed with a new senior team to face these challenges. If you are not already signed up, then I would encourage you all to sign up to the weekly AoC Briefing emails. This will keep you abreast of any changes and the possible implications for the sector.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE

16-18 enrolments are now at **99.9%** of target with around 800 students either booked in to enrol next week or being chased as no-shows on enrolment via external call centre. If we can get to around +8-10% of target, then that is comfortable. That would mean converting 400 of the remaining 800 which is doable. There are also a good number of 16-18 students from Ukraine who we are planning to enrol onto ESOL programmes which is an additional cohort.

2022 EXAM RESULTS

Our overall outcomes are still being collated ahead of the final submission and deadline of the end of September. However, we have had the following A Level, T Level and GCSE exam results to date:

T-LEVELS

- 100% pass rate
- 81% Distinction or Merit

The positive story is around our T-Levels outcomes as we were an early adopter college; one of only 50 providers nationally. Initial numbers were small but all 37 students passed and we are so thrilled to see so many receive high grades.

A-LEVELS

- 96% pass rate overall
- 39 courses 100% pass rate
- 73% students achieved A*- C grades
- 99% pass rate for A levels at Eastbourne and 76% A*-C grades

Our A Levels have held overall and we are particularly delighted to see that the Eastbourne pass rate is 99%, which is positive for our local schools/communities and really reinforces the quality of what we are doing. There are some issues to unpick at subject level on some campuses that we will review as part of the SAR process. Our results are in line with last year's Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG) which is reassuring.

GCSE Resit Results (all age)

- GCSE Maths: 16.8% (National 20.1%)
- GCSE English: 26.1% (National: 28.4%)

Our resit results are poor and very disappointing for our students. The national benchmarks we cite includes Sixth Form Colleges and are likely to be lower for GFE Colleges. We are reviewing our progress data to see how many of our students improved by a grade. Our adult data is in line with previous cohorts but 16-18 is far lower. This 16-18 cohort were the group who received teacher assessed grades rather than sit exams. Attendance and engagement were particularly challenging for this cohort.

We have recently appointed a college-wide Director of English & Maths, Keith Thompson, who will lead on our rapid improvement agenda for English and maths so that a far greater proportion of our students achieve in future years.

SENIOR RECRUITMENT

In August, we welcomed our new Vice Principal, Kym O'Mara and new Assistant Principal, Lucy Mitchell and both are making a big impact on the work of their teams already. Hannah Caldwell, new COO, will start with us on 3rd October 2022 and we are interviewing on the 16th September for our new Executive Director of Finance.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Over the summer break, via our delegated mechanisms, we have signed our IOT Commercial Agreement with the DFE as part of the South East IOT consortia. This will now trigger the release of our capital grant and resources. This grant provides our match funding element to the Towns Deal fund.

The lease for the Decarbonisation Academy has been signed off with Eastbourne Borough Council and we are preparing for the opening of the centre in Hampden Park as part of the Strategic Development Fund in October.

The FE Sussex CDF2 bid was successful. This round of the project has a digital theme and Sussex Colleges have received a total of £2.3m to support the setup of 9 Centres of Digital Excellence (CODES). East Sussex College will receive £601k as part of this project.

HE UPDATE

The University of Brighton wrote to us over the summer to give us 12 months' notice on our HE validated provision in Eastbourne and Lewes. This is part of their wider strategy to reduce partnership delivery. The VC, Debra Humphries visited Hastings to discuss this on the 1st September and stressed her commitment to working strategically on articulated pathways.

This leaves us with an immediate challenge in terms of securing new partnerships in time for next September, so we are rapidly exploring a range of partnerships with a range of universities and have already begun these discussions.

DILIGENT BOARDS

Over the summer we have been working with Diligent to plan the data migration from BoardPacks to Diligent Boards. Please note the following schedule:

IMPLEMENTATION STEP	DATE
Data Migration Call	19th September 2022 @11:00 GMT
Administrator Training Essentials	13th September 2022 @ 11:00 GMT or 15th September 2022 @ 14:00 GMT
Administrator Training Advanced	20th September 2022 @ 11:00 GMT or 22nd September 2022 @ 14:00 GMT
Data Migration Completed	26th September – 30th September 2022
Board Orientation Training – Web	4th October 2022 @ 11:00 GMT or 6th October 2022 @ 14:00 GMT
Board Orientation Training – iPad/Android	4th October 2022 @ 14:00 GMT or 6th October 2022 @ 11:00 GMT
Go Live with Diligent Boards	10th October 2022
Data Migration Sign-Off/Board-Packs Site Decommission	Transition end date as per Boards Contract.

All users (and administrators) will receive comprehensive training on how to use the system via webinars – details to follow in due course. Please also note that any annotations you have made to meeting packs in the BoardPacks system will not be included in the migration and instructions will follow on how to save these files.

KEY GOVERNANCE UPDATES

• GOVERNANCE GUIDE

The DfE recently published the new FE & Sixth-form College Corporations: Governance Guide, which outlines the legal/regulatory requirements and recommended practice that apply to further education and sixth-form college corporations.

• CHARITIES ACT

The Charity Commission has published an update on the implementation of the Charities Act 2022. Information on the changes being introduced can be found here.

• GOVERNOR DATA COLLECTION

Last year the FE workforce governor data collection was launched to support policy development. We are currently consolidating this information and you may be contacted by Claire to support this effort. The deadline for submission is **25th November 2022**.