

GOVERNORS NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #3 SUMMER 2023

An Update from the Chair

AOC LATEST

The new National Chair's Council has been established and I was fortunate to be involved in the development of the policy framework for the coming year. Following a national policy event, it was agreed that the AoC would provide a focus in four key areas:

- **Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)** – working collaboratively with the local chambers to develop an understanding of what the implementation of LSIPs should look like, ensuring connections are made to wider policy areas and to consider different models of collective governance in relation to LSIP implementation.
- Take a key role in gathering and sharing effective practice, including capture and shared learning from the **External Board Reviews**.
- Improve the profile and voice of Governors by developing and maximising opportunities to influence national policy makers (including the DfE).
- Align college staff/executive advertising and branding with a push for **Governor recruitment**. Consider working with the Further Education Commissioner (FEC) to develop a talent pool of Governors so that those who leave a college after 8 years would not be lost to the sector.

The Chairs' Network have discussed on several occasions, how to engage better with Staff and Student Governors. As a result of this, the AoC are launching **two new networks**, one for Staff Governors and the other for Student Governors. This will sit alongside both the Chairs' Network and the Governance Professionals' Network, and is seen as a positive step. We will be encouraging all our Staff and Student Governors to participate in these networks moving forward.

REFLECTIONS ON 2022-23

Finally, as I reflect on the first year since being elected Chair of the Board, I am mindful of where we were just four years ago when I joined the Corporation. At that time, we were heading for FEC intervention, identified as 'Requires Improvement' and with a Board and an executive very different from where we are today.

The change since then is almost unbelievable; Ofsted 'Good' in every category, out of intervention and the subsequent Post Intervention Monitoring and Support (PIMS) process, consistently showing

a financial rating of 'Good', a Board of committed Governors ready and willing to provide challenge and support, and a complete Executive and Senior Leadership Team.

We are in great shape to move onwards and upwards, remembering of course the ever-present challenges around funding, student recruitment and staff recruitment, retention, and reward. I am very grateful for the support I have had from all Governors and Executive Members. It is because of that support, we have been able to move forward, face the challenges and develop. Here's to a successful new academic year.

An Update from the CEO & Principal

QUALITY & STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

We are now fully immersed in the exam season, with A Levels and English and Maths GCSEs underway, and our students have already engaged so well. Improving English and Maths achievement is a key priority for the college and a new strategy has been developed in partnership with the teaching teams. Improving the 'value add' in our A Levels and Level 3 graded programmes is also an important priority, which is measured using students' prior attainment to set target grades.

LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT FUND (SDF3)

FE Sussex is exploring the possible themes and areas for collaborative development as part of the awaited launch of the Local Skills Improvement Fund (formally known as the Skills Development Fund). Sussex Chamber of Commerce recently led on the sector deep dives and the emerging themes are being reviewed to shape this potential bid which has a summer deadline. Leadership & Management is an overarching theme, in terms of micro businesses and small & medium enterprise (SME) growth. Updates will be provided once the specifications have been received and projects identified.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Discussions are underway with East Sussex County Council to explore opportunities for partnership between East Sussex College and another local adult skills delivery provider. This partnership could support the marketing and employer relationships within this area and open further delivery options for the College. This area is underserved in terms of adult skills-based opportunities, with a rising demographic.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PANELS

Each Local College Board has received an update on the next stages of the transition from the existing Boards to Stakeholder Engagement Panels. The membership of each group will be reviewed to identify skills gaps and any overrepresented sectors. The revised terms of reference will be shared with existing members, along with a request for them opt in or out. We will also conduct a search for new members where gaps any exist, with the intention being to ensure a smooth transition to structure. Our Chair has written to all Local Board members to thank them for their service as we move into the new arrangements.

An Update from the Director of Governance

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE

An external governance review has been underway this term, led by reviewers from the Education & Training Foundation (ETF) and the Institute of Directors (IoD). An external governance review is one way in which a Board can evaluate how well it is fulfilling its duties in a variety of areas, including effective oversight of the college's educational quality, financial sustainability, meeting local skills needs, and other aspects of effective governance.

Governors, Co-opted Members and the Executive Team have been asked to complete a comprehensive survey and some have also participated in interviews with the ETF Reviewer. Similarly, the IoD Reviewer has led interviews with some of our key external partners as well. All Committee meetings are being observed this term, as well as our final Board meeting of the year on 3rd July 2023.

A report will be drafted as output of the review, which will be shared during an Extraordinary Chairs Group meeting on 20th July 2023. All Governors are also welcome to attend.

We look forward to some useful insights and opportunities as a key output of this important process.

AOC CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE CONSULTATION

The Association of Colleges (AoC) Governors' Council published its first Code of Good Governance for English Colleges in March 2015. However, over time, the AoC Code of Good Governance has become overly long, lost its potency and now duplicates requirements in other guidance and constitutional documents.

Earlier this year, the AoC National Chairs' Council conducted a comprehensive review of the AoC Code of Good Governance, which resulted in a new format being developed:

- The draft AoC Code now includes six governance principles, instead of ten:
 1. **Determination of Organisational Aims & Strategic Oversight.**
 2. **Responsibility & Accountability**
 3. **Leadership & Integrity**
 4. **Collaboration & Stakeholder Engagement**
 5. **Regulatory Compliance**
 6. **Board & Organisational Effectiveness**
- For each principle, there is a rationale to set out why it is important and how it applies to FE. Beneath each principle are suggested sources of assurance. These are not exhaustive, or intended as a check list, but indicate how Boards can assure themselves that the code principle is being met.
- The draft AoC Code directly references the following key areas, ensuring alignment with recent changes to policy or DfE guidance:
 - Review how well the education or training provided meets local needs.
 - Guidance on external governance reviews.
 - FE and Sixth Form College Corporations: Governance Guide.

A four-week consultation process occurred throughout March 2023. The results of which (and the finalised AoC Code of Good Governance) are due to be published later this year.