



— Inspire Education Group —

IEG CORPORATION BOARD

March 5, 2024

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Stamford College

ATTENDANCE

PRESENT

David Pennell (Chair)
Angela Morris (Vice Chair)
David Cashmore
Jonathan Teesdale
Professor Sir Les Ebdon
Pamela Kilbey
Vincent Brittain
Rod Allerton
Tony Keeling
Suneel Appan
Rachel Nicholls (Chief Executive Officer)
Tony Warner (PC Staff Governor)
Steve Saffhill (SC Staff Governor)

IN ATTENDANCE

Joanne Ulyatt (Governance Director)
Edward Thomas (Chief Operating Officer)
Louise Perry (Chief Financial Officer)
Alison Fox (Executive Director Business Development)
Angela O'Reilly (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality)
Sarah Young (Vice Principal, Student & Staff Experience)

APOLOGIES

Faustina Yang
Qun Yang
Gillian Beasley
Marco Cereste
Martin Ballard
Charlotte Berry (PC Student Governor)



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31. WELCOME

Standing item

Speaker: Chair

Time: 17:00

- (a) Apologies for absence
- (b) Confirmation of eligibility and declarations of interest.
- (c) Requests for urgent business.

- a) Apologies were as noted.
- b) No notice had been received of any Member becoming ineligible to hold office, the meeting was quorate and interests were declared.
- c) There was no urgent business requested.

32. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING (13.12.2023)

Decision item

Speaker: Chair

Time: 17:02

- Matters arising from the minutes
- Action from the minutes
- Training undertaken & meetings attended to be logged on Governance Training Log

- a) The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2023 were confirmed for signature. **(ACTION 10)**
- b) Matters arising from the minutes: There were no matters arising.
- c) Actions from the minutes: All actions from the last meeting were complete.

33. COMMITTEE MEETINGS UPDATE AND ACTIONS FOR CORPORATION

Information item

Speaker: Chair

Time: 17:05

Committee meeting updates & Actions (Minutes from recent meetings included in Supplementary Pack):

- (a) Search & Governance Committee and Remuneration Committee - 31 January 2024
 - Appointment of potential new governor
- (b) Curriculum & Quality Committee - 6 February 2024 (Minutes included in Supplementary Pack)
 - QIP Update

NB. The Supplementary Pack Papers can be found in the 'Documents Next Meeting' folder on the left-hand navigation menu under 'Board Meetings'

- a) The Search & Governance Committee recommended the appointment of GR to the Corporation Board and the IEG Audit Committee. GR is a qualified accountant and has a wealth of relevant skills and experience.

*The Corporation Board **ratified** the appointment of Gemma Roger to the Corporation Board and the IEG Audit Committee.*



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- b) GR was welcomed to the meeting.
- c) The student governor for Peterborough College had resigned from the Corporation Board and the elected Vice President of the Student Union had stepped up into the role.

*The Corporation Board **ratified** the appointment of Charlotte Berry as a student governor to the Corporation Board and the Curriculum & Quality Committee.*

d) The QIP had been scrutinised alongside the C&Q KPIs at the Curriculum & Quality meeting held in February. The Chair of C&Q noted excellent progress and retention rates, but reported challenges with attendance at lower levels and a real focus on efforts to improve this position. It was noted that attendance had therefore been added into the QIP in-year as an area of concern. Nationally, schools and colleges are reporting attendance issues post-Covid due to mental health struggles among young people. IEG teams are working on solutions to keep students engaged and ensuring academic progress.

e) Governors inquired about parent interaction strategies to encourage some ownership; a proactive approach helps is taken to help identify potential problems early. Whilst some parents are very supportive, others are to a lesser degree and the teams have to work around this to offer additional support to help the young person reach their goals. Monthly monitoring by the VP will continue throughout the limited number of months remaining, whilst Assistant Heads of Faculty and support teams will be monitoring daily to try to avoid students entering NEET statistics. Despite some erratic attendance there are signs of student progress and engagement.

f) Governors asked if measures were in place to ensure that the work being done now is impacting on the QIP attendance item; support teams are being utilised and clear processes are established involving relevant internal and external support services as appropriate. Some students are facing some very challenging, dysfunctional personal lives and IEG are committed to finding solutions that fit their individual needs to help them remain in education where possible.

34. CEO REPORT

Information item

Speaker: CEO

Time: 17:15

- a) An update paper was presented.
- b) Positive news regarding in-year growth had been received from the ESFA; 1.5M against an expectation of 1M.
- c) Changes to English and maths funding and expected tuition hours recently announced by the government has raised concerns about the management and potential costs of this.
- d) Governors sought clarification regarding the purpose of the UTC's proposed extension and whether this indicated a desire to increase student capacity or to deliver additional courses; the extension plans propose additional breakout and social space, including an area for exercise. It also seeks to meet the demand of the growing student body as they extend their intake to Year 7. Permission from IEG as the landlord was not requested initially, but RN has since held discussions with the UTC. The proposal will be brought to the Corporation Board if it is pursued and further developed.
- e) Governors acknowledged the funding promise regarding RAAC mitigations which was welcomed, but questioned when it would be delivered on; RN advised that it is understood that the funds for mitigations are available but the specifics and timelines remain unclear.
- f) The potential impact of Lincolnshire devolution on funding and opportunities was discussed. The growth and innovation projects achieved with the CPCA may not be replicated as a result of Lincolnshire devolution as their funding priorities may differ. The importance of collaboration and the sharing of IEG experiences with the CPCA to help inform Lincolnshire strategies was emphasised, and RN/AF have already been involved in initial conversations.



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g) RN highlighted her recent attendance at an event at No 10 Downing Street related to engagement initiatives she is involved in.

h) IEG will be hosting the Shadow Science Minister for a visit on Friday to deliver a STEM speech coinciding with International Women's Day which will potentially attract BBC coverage.

i) Recruitment activity for a Chief Curriculum Officer is complete and a suggested start date in late June is proposed. The extensive and rigorous selection process included meetings and panels with various staff members and direct reports. An overview of the proposed candidate was provided.

*The Corporation Board **approved** the appointment of the Chief Curriculum Officer.*

j) An update was provided on the Advanced Learner Loan allocation issue and the impact on recruitment. IEG continue to raise this with the ESFA to see if an improved allocation can be secured for 2024/25.

35. EXTERNAL BOARD REVIEW

Discussion item

Speaker: Governance Director

Time: 17:25

a) The external report was presented, having been reviewed by the Search & Governance Committee.

b) Positive aspects of the report were highlighted and areas for improvement were identified as opportunities to challenge and enhance future performance.

*The Corporation Board **approved** the publishing of the report in its entirety on the IEG website.
(ACTION 11)*

36. GOVERNANCE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022/23

Decision item

Speaker: Governance Director

Time: 17:30

A comprehensive document compiling analysis from a number of sources was presented. The Governance Director noted that discussions were underway with the Chair and CEO regarding ideas for developing the self-assessment process in order to achieve a more dynamic document and tangible outputs going forward; input from all governors was welcomed by the Governance Director.

(ACTION 12)

*The IEG Corporation Board **approved** the Governance Self-Assessment Document 2022/23 and **adopted** the actions arising from the self-assessment.*

37. GOVERNOR DASHBOARD 2023/24

Discussion item

Speaker: CEO/CFO

Time: 17:35

a) The year-end financial health rating is still forecast as "Good", however, the YTD position is "Requires Improvement" This is primarily due to capital grants not being received in the timeframe anticipated.



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- b) A significant reduction in staff turnover was reported; governors highlighted this as a positive indicator of the Group's culture.
- c) Energy consumption has decreased compared to the prior year, with impressive reductions in electricity and gas savings attributed to investment in the estate and energy saving measures.
- d) Staff costs increased due to the pay award in January 2024.
- e) A single RIDDOR incident (broken wrist with full recovery expected) was reported.
- f) The AEB data was discussed, with governors challenging whether IEG has diversified its income stream sufficiently and looked far enough ahead to reduce dependence on 16-19 funding. AEB funding is via allocation and has not changed since 2015. Many other colleges have a far greater reliance on 16 - 19 (closer to 80%) so IEG is doing well in comparison. Potential avenues to consider entering into are private full cost training or specialist training, and this potential changing of the mix of provision forms part of the strategic discussions. Market analysis is required to see where there is potential for growth. Apprenticeships should ideally be the vehicle for growth but this cannot be utilised until quality is improved; with Apprenticeships currently underperforming it would be too damaging to try to grow this provision without first consolidating the quality.
- g) IEG is striving to position itself well to draw benefit from the Lifelong Learning Entitlement initiative and HTQ funding. It was noted that whilst the pilot program for these qualifications saw low participation, IEG is well-placed to benefit due to its secured funding and existing HE provision within the FE setting which provides a greater opportunity to recruit the type of students this funding is intended for. A key challenge could be reluctance of mature students, who are the intended audience, to take on debt for upskilling. Despite this potential challenge, IEG has expressed interest in being an early adopter of the initiative but has not yet received confirmation. The potential of HTQs was acknowledged as a valuable tool to diversify funding sources and address over reliance on other funding streams.
- h) Internal Audits with red RAG ratings were noted; all have been progressed, with some moved to green and some to amber. Fuller details will be provided to the Finance & Resources Committee within routine update reports.
- i) Governors commented on the seemingly low number of staff currently undergoing performance management for capability concerns. This prompted a question about whether IEG might be neglecting performance management efforts, particularly in an environment with high turnover or vacancies. This inquiry was acknowledged as a valuable challenge and in response, it was highlighted that a new and improved HR Report is under development to address this type of concern. Capability procedures are not used during probation, which is a rigorous process, and more staff exit through probation than through capability procedures. Additionally, support structures via QTLs for teaching staff may also be dealing with underperformance so that issues are addressed before reaching the capability stage. Some staff have exited through disciplinary procedures where they would otherwise have gone on to capability. Governors requested to see data on this, therefore, in order to provide a more complete picture, HR will include data on support plans, probationary exits and disciplinary exits that would have otherwise been classified as capability concerns. **(ACTION 13)**
- j) Vacancies over 180 days led to discussion around the difficulty of recruiting assessors for trade apprenticeships; this is managed using QRS and subcontracts but ideally in-house recruitment would be preferred. There may come a point where market rate allowances have to be revisited for particular trades. It was also noted that the Executive Team undertake reviews of all longstanding vacancies to determine their continued relevance.
- k) Recruitment for key personnel for delivery of new courses within the Centre for Green Technology is underway, as well as training and development of existing staff.
- l) Governors acknowledged the significant improvements in the IEG dashboard, evidenced by the rigour of questioning and challenges raised during the discussion.



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38. APPRENTICESHIPS IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

Discussion item

Speaker: EDBD

Time: 17:45

- a) Initially scrutinised by the Curriculum & Quality Committee, an update on the Apprenticeship improvements was provided to Board due to its significance.
- b) The paper included an update on the restructure which will move some of the Apprenticeship delivery back into relevant curriculum areas to address areas flagged by Ofsted. Whilst 11 staff members faced potential redundancy, revised roles were created to focus on quality assurance, apprenticeship recruitment and onboarding; all 11 staff members have successfully transitioned into these revised positions. Extensive consultations were conducted to address any concerns throughout the process and a final meeting scheduled for tomorrow will conclude the consultation and outlining and reinforcing expectations going forward.
- c) Since employers have a significant input into apprenticeship programmes, face-to-face visits are being implemented to ensure proper onboarding and ongoing engagement.
- d) The achievement rate is steadily increasing and now stands at 51% which is a significant improvement compared to the same period last year. An end of year achievement rate of 62.8% is forecast, representing a potential 9% increase on the previous year. This positive trend suggests progress in the right direction is being made. The first attempt pass rate for End Point Assessments is very strong at 97%.
- e) Governors challenged as to how the changes being made will influence the longer term strategy. The Executive Team are content with how things are progressing and all of the proposed improvement strategies should be in place and operational by the end of the month. Efforts are also underway to establish measures to assess the longer-term impact of the changes being made.
- f) In general, retention rates tend to correlate with achievement rates, as retained apprentices are likely to achieve the qualification. However, the extended duration of some apprenticeship programmes of up to 4 years can present a unique challenge in terms of longer-term retention.
- g) VB expressed his support for the actions taken by the Executive Team and believes that the revised roles and remits of the team members should ensure that improvements are realised because relationships with employers are key. The team are also working with the Apprenticeship Officer from Inspire+ to ensure best practices in terms of employer engagement.
- h) Governors acknowledged the complexity of understanding the financial viability of apprenticeship intakes. Funding is based on a cumulative model and this was explained in further detail to ensure the detail within the dashboard is understood.

39. PREVENT UPDATE, RISK ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

Decision item

Speaker: VP SSE

Time: 17:55

- a) An annual update was provided on how IEG is meeting its Prevent Duty requirements. Governors were asked to acknowledge and confirm that all necessary actions are being taken.
- b) The IEG risk assessment document presented was considered comprehensive, thorough and very robust. There is confidence that all relevant areas are covered comprehensively within the papers and the Supplementary Pack and that everything is aligned to government proformas.
- c) Following the Shawcross Review, recommendations were introduced to update the Prevent Duty guidance. IEG's Prevent Risk Assessment and Action Plan were reviewed in November 2023 and reflect



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the updated guidance. A summary table was highlighted which identifies key themes within the updated guidance, plus a list detailing how IEG has responded with any new actions or changes made.

d) There was a total of 3 Channel Referrals to date in 2023/24; two at PC and one at SC, none of which met the threshold of requiring further intervention and have all now been closed. This is consistent with the position last year.

e) Attention was drawn to the termly Safeguarding & Prevent newsletter published to all staff and governors, which includes local and regional Prevent risks.

f) In view of recent ministerial comments and given the diverse community that IEG serves, governors questioned how IEG's approach compares against other FE colleges. Whilst there has not been any significant activity on campus relating to the situation in Gaza, IEG is being proactive and doing a lot of good work in this area, not because of legislation but because it is the right course of action. Experiences noted by TK and LE from external settings were noted as valuable reports for fellow governors.

The Corporation Board ratified the Prevent Update, Risk Assessment & Action Plan and confirmed that Prevent requirements were adequately met.

40. FINANCE REPORT

Decision item

Speaker: CFO/EDBD

Time: 18:05

- (a) P6 Report
- (b) Financial Regulations Update
- (c) Learning Curve Contract Approval

P6 Finance Report:

a) The P6 report was presented with a YTD surplus position of 185K. The forecast surplus is in line with expectation and consistent with the position reported in the autumn. A full year surplus of 392K is forecast for the Group.

b) Some uncertainties remain, including the full impact of increased employer TPS costs and the success of the February recruitment drive, the results of which will not be available before the next F&R meeting next week.

c) The Nursery remains broadly on track with a more detailed paper going to the Finance & Resources Committee next week. The original budget was for a breakeven position and it is currently at a 10K deficit, which is an improvement on the 22/23 performance.

d) In terms of capital grants which would improve the position, governors queried if there was any risk of not securing the funds; signed funding agreements are in place which guarantee receipt, so they are just waiting to be drawn down and there is no risk or concern around this.

e) Governors challenged as to whether the team were giving themselves an unnecessarily hard time by stating that they are "significantly below plan" with cash days at 57 rather than the target of 60; the difference between actual and the planned position is a significant reduction against plan but the reasons for this are known and it is not causing any operational issues, but simply means missing out on some potential interest income.

f) An update of the refurbishment programme was provided, with a planned completion date of 31 Dec 2024 rather than July as stated in the paper. The spend was planned to be all in this year, however 500K is now forecast to be rolled into September. A paper will be presented to the Finance & Resources Committee. This reflects a timing issue rather than a funding issue.



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- g) The ESFA have backtracked on new measurements for financial health and are returning to the old metrics; the impact of this on IEG has not yet been worked through as the team are still working on understanding what the drawdown will be at the end of the year.
- h) No balance sheet issues are anticipated now or at year end
- i) The Centre for Green Technology is on track to deliver to budget and on time. There is a slight risk of delay due to inclement weather but mitigating factors are already being employed to reduce the risk.
- j) A request for governors to visit the site will be accommodated on 21 March at 3:30pm.

Financial Regulations Update:

- a) A recommendation in the External Audit report noted that the upper approval limit threshold for Debt Write-Offs was incorrect in the Financial Regulations. The amendment required reduces the upper threshold from 50K to 45K for a single transaction. There were no regulatory errors relating to this since no debts of this value had been written off of this value. Governors' approval was sought to reflect the corrected figure.
- b) A second request was made to amend signatory approvals to update and broaden the number of staff members able to sign off contracts, sales invoices, purchase invoices and payroll. This reflects changes in SPH and the inclusion of qualified accountants into the approvals process to allow for periods of annual leave. The number of staff suggested for inclusion for major transactions such as payroll will remain limited.

*The Corporation Board **approved** the proposed amendments to the IEG Financial Regulations to align with reclassification guidance on bad debt write off approval thresholds, and to update signatories for approvals.*

Learning Curve Contract Approval:

- a) A report was provided detailing the proposed Supported Delivery Programme to enable IEG to put in place a gradual increase in direct delivery, to ensure the AEB allocation is reached and allow possible growth in future years.
- b) Governors were reminded that in order to meet ESFA requirements to reduce the amount of subcontracted delivery IEG need to plan a substantial increase in directly delivered programmes to adults.
- c) A lot of work has been done with Learning Curve who have very good Ofsted reports, and who have recognised that they need to employ a different model because colleges are not able to subcontract so much delivery to them. The new model will allow IEG to gradually take over what Learning Curve currently deliver and over the course of 3 years it is expected that IEG would then deliver all of it via direct delivery.
- d) The proposed pilot which will run until July would explore whether this different way of doing things would meet ESFA requirements and provide the opportunity for IEG to gradually increase direct delivery to meet the AEB allocation.
- e) The physical structure was outlined, with IEG taking more ownership and responsibility, and Learning Curve supporting throughout the process.

*The Corporation Board **approved** the pilot for the Learning Curve Supported Delivery Programme.*

- f) An update on this pilot is to be added to the Corporation Board agenda for July. **(ACTION 14)**

41. RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT



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Discussion item

Speaker: CFO

Time: 18:20

A summary of the position was provided. Two strategic risk scores had been reduced and one had increased as a result of the Executive Team review; governors agreed that the movements were right to be reflected.

42. STATUTORY REPORTS FOR PUBLICATION

Decision item

Speaker: COO/CFO/VPSSE

Time: 18:30

- (a) Streamlined Energy & Carbon Report
- (b) Modern Slavery Statement
- (c) EDI Report 2022/23 & Action Plan

a) The Streamlined Energy & Carbon Report was presented, noting that the baseline year 2019/20 was the first year of the first lockdown so does not provide an actual portrayal, therefore last years figures were also included for comparison. A number of initiatives have been implemented, the impact of which should be seen in next year's report.

The report will be formatted with IEG branding prior to publishing on the website.

*The Streamlined Energy & Carbon Report was **approved** for publication on the IEG website by the Corporation Board.*

b) The Modern Slavery Statement required no significant changes this year due to limited legislative updates and a relatively stable supplier base.

The statement will be formatted with IEG branding prior to publishing on the website.

*The Modern Slavery Statement was **approved** for publication on the IEG website by the Corporation Board.*

c) Governors gave positive feedback on the presentation of EDI work, highlighting strong success stories achieved over the past year. The report will continue to be developed for future years to showcase ongoing progress. Governors appreciated the wealth of information provided.

The EDI Report 2022/23 was **approved** for publication on the IEG website by the Corporation Board.

43. URGENT BUSINESS: (RE ITEM 54C)

Standing item

Speaker: Chair

None received.

44. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY 14 MAY 2024 (PC)

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 7:06pm.