



Department for Education

Gagan Mohindra
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Rt. Hon. Robert Halfon MP
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Dear Gagan,

I am writing to inform you of the Government's view of the position of Epping Forest College following the recent assessment by the Further Education (FE) Commissioner's team and the steps that need to be taken to secure improvement. As you are aware, following an "inadequate" Ofsted inspection grading in November 2016, I asked the FE Commissioner to carry out an assessment of the college. This took place between 11th and 13th January 2017.

I strongly welcome your appointment as permanent Chair of the Corporation. Having read the FE Commissioner's report I am aware that there have been a number of issues with governance of the college, and your appointment provides the opportunity to give strong leadership to addressing these issues.

I am also encouraged that your recently appointed Principal has clear plans for a new organisational structure. These have significant costs, and you will need to pay close attention to their affordability going forward. The college's financial health has recently deteriorated and it is evident that insufficient action was taken to address the reduced funding allocations in 2016/17. In addition, pay costs are significantly over budget.

The FE Commissioner's team have made a number of recommendations to support improvement. It is particularly important that existing board vacancies are filled quickly with individuals with the appropriate skills. This includes the appointment of a governor who is a qualified accountant. The corporation also needs to ensure that it has the necessary level of clerking expertise to support the Board.

The continual change in leadership and the lack of accurate and timely information that they have provided to the Board on achievement and progress has played a key

part in the decline of outcomes for learners and apprentices. The corporation will need to support the new Principal in putting in place a strengthened and permanent leadership team to support the delivery of improvements.

Given the severity of the issues raised in the Ofsted report, the issues in governance, and the emerging financial challenges, I am placing the college into Administered College Status.

The FE Commissioner team will now undertake a Structure and Prospects Appraisal as a matter of urgency. This will inform the Essex Area Review and ensure ongoing financial viability and the rapid improvement of the learning experience at the college. This should give you sufficient time to begin implementing actions set out in your recovery plan.

I have accepted all of the FE Commissioner's recommendations and a summary of the initial assessment is provided with this letter. This document and my letter will be published on www.gov.uk in approximately two weeks.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the factual accuracy of the FE Commissioner's assessment please contact the FE Commissioner (fe.commissioner@education.gov.uk) in the first instance.

I am copying this letter to Eleanor Laing MP for Epping Forest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Halfon'.

ROBERT HALFON MP