

Minutes

Date 22 February 2024

Subject ESFA Management Board

Security OFFICIAL – FOR PUBLICATION

classification

Present

<u>Members</u>

Martin Spencer (MS)

Non Executive Director, Chair

Harjit Sandhu (HS)

Peter Kane (PK)

John Lakin (JL)

Paul Woodgates (PW)

Non-Executive Director

Non-Executive Director

Non-Executive Director

David Withey (DW) Chief Executive Officer, ESFA

Andrew Thomas (AT) Director, ESFA Gemma Peck (GP) Director, ESFA

Others in attendance

Jane Cunliffe (JC) DfE Senior Sponsor
Tika Khan (TK) Deputy Director, ESFA

Mark Wilson (MW) Interim Deputy Director, ESFA

Tabatha Wincote (TW) ESFA, Secretariat

Harry Warren (HW) ESFA
Ruth Humphreys (RHu) ESFA
El Harrison (EH) ESFA
Bronwyn Ward (BW) – item 5 only ESFA
Claire Parry (CP) – item 6 only ESFA
Sally Dyson (SD) – item 6 only ESFA

Apologies

Lindsey Henning (LH) Director, ESFA

Rachel Hansford (Rha) Deputy Director, ESFA

1. Welcome and introductions - MS

- MS opened the meeting and reminded attendees about confidentiality. 1.1.
- 1.2. No new declarations of interest were made.
- 1.3. The minutes of 12 December 2023 Management Board meeting were agreed.
- 1.4. The action log was reviewed. It was agreed that Action 1, 4, 5 & 7 could be closed with action 6 remaining open and in progress.

ACTION: Future Management Board risk items to include a report on risks outside of risk tolerance, where these have been escalated and actions taken.

2. Chief Executive's update – DW

- 2.1. DW provided an update and spoke to his immediate priorities including discussions on the spending review.
- 2.2. Focus for the Executive Team has been on business planning for the next financial year along with discussions with DfE colleagues on how the ESFA can provide certainty to the sector.

ACTION: GP to update Management Board on interplay between spending review timing and ESFA processes

2.3. Training for frontline staff is beginning next week to support them with difficult and challenging conversations and raise their awareness of recognising signs of stress and mental health issues.

3. ARC Chair update - HS

- HS provide an update from the January ESFA ARC meeting which he 3.1. thanked JL for chairing.
- 3.2. ESFA ARC meeting included discussions on funding system resilience which was also raised at DfE ARC.
- 3.3. ARC members were supportive of the aim to produce pre-recess, unqualified accounts.
- 3.4. The GIAA annual audit plan has been agreed.

4. Sector Management – MW

- 4.1. MW briefed Management Board on the latest update from the Regulatory and Commissioning Review.
- 4.2. Management Board members discussed how the outcome from the review will support the sector.

ACTION: Management Board papers to include regular reporting and update on the Regulatory and Commissioning Review

5. Finance item - TK

- TK presented the financial business planning update for the admin and 5.1. workforce budgets highlighting the protection that was being afforded to the funding service and specific assurance work.
- 5.2. Management Board members discussed the potential internal and external impacts and how this is being reported to the relevant Ministers.

ACTION: Update on cross-cutting efficiency work to be added to future Management Board agenda

6. People Survey update – BW

- BW presented the analysis from the CSPS results and actions that are being taken to address including the plan for consultations, listening sessions and engagement activity.
- 6.2. Management Board members discussed the role of line managers and having robust processes to support them.

7. **Performance Boards - RH**

- 7.1. RHu presented the paper on ESFA Governance Structure and Strategic Performance Boards following the GIAA audit on effectiveness of ESFA boards.
- 7.2. Management Board members formally endorsed the actions arising from the GIAA report which will revise the focus and content to ensure there were appropriate levels of scrutiny and assurance.

ACTION: Performance Board secretariat to schedule a pre-meet with the appropriate NED, Director and Governance team before each Performance Board meeting.

8. Business Plan - HW, GP, MW & AT

- 8.1. HW presented the near final draft of the 2024/25 ESFA Business Plan advising that the first round of reporting would begin in May.
- 8.2. Publication of the external plan is on target for early in the new financial year.
- 8.3. AT presented the paper on FPMO business planning in particular highlighting the detail on FE sector bursaries and free school meals. Management Board members agreed to endorse the plan put forward.
- 8.4. GP provided an update on Funding business planning confirming the latest progress on allocations in the core funding cycles and updating on the work being undertaken on the 3-year plan for the funding service

ACTION: GP to update Management Board at a future meeting on the 3-year plan for the funding service

8.5. MW updated on SFSO business planning and the process used to develop the measures.

9. AOB

- MS highlighted the papers for information that had been circulated and 9.1. for any comments to be sent via correspondence.
- 9.2. MS closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.