



Date 18 March 2025

Subject ESFA Management Board

Security classification OFFICIAL – FOR PUBLICATION

Please note: as this was the final ESFA Management Board, there was no subsequent meeting to agree these minutes. Instead, they have been agreed by the chair and the ESFA's chief operating officer.

Present

Members

Martin Spencer (MS)	Non-Executive Director, Chair
Harjit Sandhu (HS)	Non-Executive Director
Peter Kane (PK)	Non-Executive Director
Paul Woodgates (PW)	Non-Executive Director
Andrew Thomas (AT)	Director and Chief Operating Officer, ESFA
Gemma Peck (GP)	Director, ESFA

Others in attendance

Jane Cunliffe (JC)	DfE Senior Sponsor
James Koziaryn (JK)	ESFA, Finance
Sasha Jones (SJ)	ESFA, Secretariat
Fay Probert (FP)	ESFA, Corporate Governance

Apologies

David Withey	Chief Executive Officer, ESFA
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1. Welcome and introductions – MS

- 1.1. MS opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.
- 1.2. No new declarations of interest were made.
- 1.3. The minutes of 14 January 2025 Management Board meeting were agreed.
- 1.4. The action log was reviewed. All open actions were closed.
- 1.5. MB noted that AT is on point in DW's absence.

2. Audit & Risk Committee Update – HS

- 2.1. HS provided an update from ARC meetings on 18 March 2025 on the ARA timelines, CARD Assurance plan, a deep dive into counter fraud risk, an update from GIAA and NAO, and a risk update including transition risks.

3. Chief Executive's update – AT

- 3.1. AT provided an update and was pleased to report that work has been successful to ensure the closure of the agency on 31 March 2025, noting final outstanding actions are on track.
- 3.2. Management Board discussed the benefits of ESFA joining the department and efficiencies to be made as work is joined up.

4. Sponsorship Chair update – JC

- 4.1. JC provided the sponsorship update and noted her thanks to GP and AT for the high-performing functions that will be joining OIG under AT in the new, merged Funding and Financial Oversight directorate, noting the positive KPI rag ratings in CARD and Funding.
- 4.2. Management Board discussed the importance of a focus on people and culture when FFO joins OIG.
- 4.3. JC highlighted the wider lessons learnt from the agency merging into the department.

5. Handover letter – MS

- 5.1. MS provided an update on his handover letter, including positives, risks, strategic focus and performance of the agency and highlighting the strong positive culture in the agency including work to eliminate BHD and the successful role of Agency Ambassadors.
- 5.2. Management Board discussed the positive ESFA culture and investment by colleagues and noted the need to role out BHD work more widely across OIG and the department.
- 5.3. Management Board discussed the efficiencies and savings that will be made from the agency joining the department.

6. Performance update – AT & GP

- 6.1. AT provided an update on CARD directorate performance including counter fraud work, audits and ongoing KPI and milestone planning.
- 6.2. GP provided an update on Funding directorate performance including the successful allocation of pre-16 funding despite delays to the timetable, an update on adult skills funding and ongoing work to finalise 16-19 allocations, noting prioritisation of accuracy over timeliness.

- 6.3. Management Board noted their thanks for GP's contributions in light of her new role in Skills Group.

7. AOB/below the line papers - MS

- 7.1. MS and Management Board noted their thanks to DW, GP and AT for their contributions and work for the agency.
- 7.2. MS closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting closed