

THE GOOD GOVERNANCE REPORT

10th May 2007

Emirates Stadium

Ensuring the governance voice is heard

Leadership for the Learning and Skills Sector



Leadership Skills for Governance

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FOREWORD

I would like to thank all of you who attended the Second Good Governance Forum held at the Emirates Stadium on 10th May 2007. By using blogging technology we were able to capture the richness of all the policy ideas that were generated by delegates and panel members before, during and after the event.

This report summarises the key Forum findings. The ideas are thought provoking and will help move FE System governance to the next level as we collectively begin to address the challenges outlined in the FE White Paper and the Leitch Report.

This report also identifies a number of key concerns for colleges, government and its agencies to consider. Solutions to these may not have been found on the day or even happen as quickly as we all would like in the future. However, by identifying and debating them in this way we can begin that journey.

The report will serve as a constant reminder of what needs to be done to achieve the progress that we all want to see. Clarification of the governor's role, a workable framework for employer engagement and continued governor involvement in the development of what a self-regulated world would look like for governing boards, were some of the key calls for action that came from the event.

It is essential that feedback to colleges on the progress made in taking forward these recommendations is provided, and we will be reminding all the relevant key policy makers of this duty in the future. For my part, I am going to bring to the attention of business leaders and representative organisations the points raised on employer engagement identified in this paper. I will also be facilitating the discussion between business and governors at our LSG Governance Skills Summits in July. Finally, I will use this report to shape our next Good Governance Forum to be held at Wembley Stadium on 31st October 2007. I do hope you can join us then.

Thank you again for taking time to provide us with your ideas and suggestions.

David Kissman OBE

Chair, Good Governance Forum

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The second Good Governance Forum was seen to be a great success by those who attended. They cited the ease with which they could provide ideas and feedback on policy matters affecting the sector and acknowledged that the format is effective and efficient.

In each of the three breakout and panel feedback sessions, the level of contribution from delegates was exceptional and, while consensus could not be reached on every issue discussed, a number of key messages did emerge that received general support.

The session on Governor Recruitment and Retention – with a specific reference to Diversity – reinforced the concerns that governors, clerks and principals have been airing for some time about the difficulty in attracting new, suitably skilled people from all walks of life onto governing boards. There was a call for a new and more definitive role statement that was clear about the responsibilities, skills and demands expected of governors. A national campaign to heighten awareness of the role of a governor in FE was also recommended. The debate about reward for governors produced some new perspectives on non-cash benefits. There was a strong push for some form of code of practice that would encourage employers to allow time off for people to attend governing body meetings without loss of earnings – similar to that currently enjoyed by magistrates.

The session on Leitch raised serious questions about the effectiveness of the brokerage system. Although it was made clear that it was early days and the brokers were concentrating on hard-to-reach employers, there was nevertheless unease at the apparent “invisible” nature of their work. Train to Gain had mixed reviews – with some governors claiming that it had produced some valuable new programmes whilst others said that it had had minimal impact. There was concern at the way in which the future funding of FE was likely to shift more risk onto colleges because an employer-led (demand-led) strategy was thought to produce too much short-term provision with its associated lack of sustainable, reliable cash flow. More clarity about what constitutes good practice is required because governors are uncertain about the extent to which they should be using their business contacts and networks to help the college develop good relationships with employers. Generally it was felt that college staff have the requisite skills, but may require extra support to meet the demands of a healthy employer-led system. Above all else, there was a strong call for a clear framework that would enable all the relevant players to work together to develop the FE provision that would effectively meet the skills needed by UK business.

Self-regulation was seen as a significant prize for the sector as it would mean less interference from some of the current agencies. The majority of delegates felt that a new single body to oversee self-regulation should be established. It was evident that the involvement of governing boards in the development of the current proposals had been patchy. There was broad agreement that the next stages of the programme must ensure greater governor input but that this must be done without slowing down progress of the much awaited improvement to governance within the sector.

The Good Governance Forum is becoming established as the leading event for the engagement of governors in debating current issues and new policy for FE, and plans are now well underway for the next event at Wembley Stadium on 31st October. We hope to see you there.

INTRODUCTION



This is a summary of the key findings from the 2nd Good Governance Forum, held at the Emirates Stadium, London on 10th May 2007 as part of CEL's Leadership Skills for Governance programme. The forum was attended by over 200 chairs, governors, principals, senior post-holders and clerks.

Delegates were asked to contribute to three areas of debate: recruitment and diversity, the Leitch review and self-regulation. The comments and questions arising from the table discussions were put to a panel of representatives from various agencies. Panel members included: Lynne Sedgmore CBE, Chief Executive, Centre for Excellence in Leadership; Rob Wye, Director of Strategy and Communications, Learning & Skills Council; Susan Pember CBE, Director, FE Learning and Skills Performance Group, Department for Education and Skills; Andrew Thomson, Chief Executive, Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning; Sue Dutton, Deputy Chief Executive, Association of Colleges.

This report highlights the key recommendations from the Forum and also provides statements from leading policy makers about how they plan to take these ideas forward in the future.

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CHAPTER 1: RECRUITMENT AND DIVERSITY

WHAT WAS SAID



RECRUITMENT

- The definition of a diverse board should be one that demonstrates, reflects and promotes equality and diversity issues and where each governor has a core competence in equality and diversity.
- The governing board needs to have the capacity to look regionally, nationally and internationally whilst still accommodating local needs.
- Becoming a governor in FE used to enhance an individual's standing at work or in the community. But this may not be the case any longer – contributing towards a reduction in the flow of new blood into the system.
- Attracting governors from minority groups is as difficult as it is for recruitment generally.
- Advertising for governors can produce mixed results.
- Positive ways to attract new governors such as taster events – ‘seeing is believing’ – were suggested.
- Boards need to ensure that they have a diversity of skills as well as members with varied backgrounds.
- More work is needed by FE colleges to ensure ex-students remain part of the governing board.
- Disability issues need addressing and members with disabilities can bring an experience and understanding to the board that other governors may not be able to offer.
- FE needs to be smarter at selling the benefits of becoming a governor to the individual.
- Remuneration could help recruit younger people.
- Boards need to be proactive to encourage diversity of skills, experience and understanding – current practice emphasises a friends-to-friends approach that is often a barrier to diversity.

Boards need to be proactive to encourage diversity of skills, experience and understanding

RETENTION

- Keeping good governors on board was often a problem. Certain measures to solve this were proposed.
- Governors – new and old – should be involved more in the day-to-day operation of the college in order to understand fully what the important issues are and what plans exist for future development. Knowledge and experience are key to making strategic decisions.
- The volume of work to read, and other preparation for a board meeting is considerable. Taking part is a big commitment, so the support governors get is crucial. And this should be a feature of a continuous professional development (CPD) programme that would also take into consideration that governors only have a limited amount of time to volunteer.
- Providing childcare and other care to enable individuals from a broad spectrum to work as governors would improve matters.
- Role descriptions for governors would clarify what the role involves. Although board membership is unpaid, this would help potential lay members. There should be a national advertising campaign mediated through various organisations. Governors need to know that they are not accountable as individuals, but as a board. There are other public sectors that have systems that could be used as models for FE – such as the health service where people have the relevant skills and are representative of the community.
- Greater use of college web sites to promote governance as a social opportunity was recommended.
- It is imperative that targets are set to maximise the opportunity to bring in parents as governors.
- In order to achieve transparency, a national campaign is needed: marketing of FE often plays second fiddle to schools and HE. Defining what is meant by high calibre, transferable skills rather than looking for role-specific representatives, such as ‘bankers’ or ‘solicitors’ should be a priority.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

- Delegates wondered whether boards wait for someone to leave before acting, or plan ahead. The latter is obviously preferable: succession planning allows individuals to tap into new sources for recruitment.
- Methods that have been used successfully in the recruitment process have included skills matrices that are then evaluated according to need. They also provide a focus for dealing with the issue of attendance and its relationship to member contribution.
- Colleges with a high turnover of governors should review to ascertain why it is so high and measure the consequent impact on the college. It was suggested that there might be a hardcore in the ‘establishment’ that dominates proceedings and discourages new members from contributing.
- It is important to ensure that monitoring is adequate and appropriate so that an agreed and clear framework is in place to measure governors’ performance – to a common set of standards across the sector.

- Exit interviews are vital – especially when underrepresented governors stand down.
- There should be a bank of local and regional data on diversity that boards can use as a benchmark for their performance.
- Colleges should join together locally and regionally to help recruit and retain governors – by sharing costs and advice about ways of improving quality and diversity (Hertfordshire is an example of good practice in this respect).
- Governor recruitment should be linked to any employer engagement strategy.
- A clear audit trail on the interview process would show that the appropriate procedures for recruiting people with the necessary skills have been followed. If it is documented, then it should be evident from any subsequent inspection. It is important to bear in mind that people may be put off by certain recruitment approaches: possible pitfalls can be avoided by consulting with the specific community from which suitable representatives can be drawn.

LESSONS FROM OTHER SECTORS

- It was pointed out that successful change had taken place in other public sectors like the NHS with their scheme Payment for Time – remunerating governance membership. But the delegates were not sure that this was a good route to take in the FE system.
- Open access to AGMs was seen to be working well in certain sectors and it was felt that it might be suitable for FE.
- The issue of a ‘blend’ of time for those able to serve was considered a possibility.
- It was agreed that there should be a rigorous process for new applications in order to maintain a mix of skills and to reflect changes in the college and the community.
- Employers might be persuaded to include time out for governance attendance as part of their apprenticeship schemes.
- Having governors who sit on more than one board – university, FE college, secondary school and so on – could improve governance performance through the pooling of skills and ideas.

NATIONAL SUPPORT

- There was a call for the role of the governing board to be clarified. This needs to be transparent and understood.
- It was felt that government and other agencies should appreciate the level of knowledge required to cope with the challenges in FE and, consequently, what they can reasonably expect from a volunteer.
- Delegates suggested that more imaginative ways were needed to promote the role of governor to employers, parents, students and the wider community. They were critical of the government for giving out mixed messages about the purpose of boards, but noted that the Governance Good Practice Guide (GGPG) has helped clarify matters.
- Large companies could play a part by highlighting governance recruitment and diversity issues in their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes. Overall, it was clear that there was an immediate need to improve the situation through a robust system of induction and training.

- Boards could be supported within a high level framework that defines their roles and responsibilities. And, even though equality legislation is driving the agenda on diversity, boards are still empowered to make decisions regarding their particular skills mix when they recruit.
- Strategies to tackle inequality should ensure that all underrepresented groups are protected, with a clear focus on the positive aspects of diversity and not be mere tokenism. There was an admission that in FE there is a tendency to collect data – on ethnic monitoring, for example – but then nothing is done about it. Information should only be asked for if it is going to be used.
- The role of Search Committees was regarded as vital to the monitoring of governor diversity. And so, in a self-regulated world, more help and advice should be provided for them so that they can avoid external regulation or intervention.

- The question of how to reward governors for their contribution was raised again and it was agreed that further investigation was necessary.
- Giving a governor a salary could be an incentive and attract people from different backgrounds. But there was evidence from local government that when councillors began to be paid the composition of the council changed – and not always for the good!
- Remuneration does not always entail cash, but time. Taking time off to attend meetings would probably make it easier for governors to perform their duties properly. But the downside is that employers can make life difficult for those employees who want to be governors. They may be inclined to block promotion opportunities, for example – arguing that he, or she, is not fully committed to their jobs.

- It was agreed that more research was needed to find ways of overcoming such barriers. But a possible solution might be to have time allowance determined by a central authority, such as the government or an empowered agency – to prevent the individual employer from being obstructive and allow employees to undertake governance duties without losing out on their career prospects.

CHAPTER 2: IMPLEMENTING LEITCH

WHAT WAS SAID



INTRODUCTION

- Working in partnership – as a consortium, for example – was seen as an effective way of reducing duplication, enabling providers in the system to work more effectively in the interests of learners, employers and the local community.
- The use of consortia for contracts should be encouraged, too, as it formalises collaboration and the benefits that come with it.
- It was felt that a focus on Level 2 should not be a distraction from other high level qualifications for a skilled workforce. Investment in languages, science, literacy and numeracy was equally important.
- The blame culture relating to skills should be consigned to the past, delegates believed. Government, employers and education providers can use Leitch as a framework to put this right.
- There was a call to improve basic education in schools. Having to remedy poor literacy and numeracy skills was costing colleges valuable time.
- It seemed that there is potential with the 14-19 age group for greater employer engagement. There are also more opportunities for individuals to progress at college as they increase their understanding of the college environment.
- The raising of the school leaving age was welcomed as a massive opportunity for colleges to give learners, who might normally leave at 16, a chance to make progress and do something they really want.

There was a call to improve basic education in schools. Having to remedy poor literacy and numeracy skills was costing colleges valuable time

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

- Delegates called for the role of Sector Skills Councils to be enhanced so that they can effect change by penetrating small and medium size enterprises (SMEs).
- The role of governors in engaging with employers was unclear. The forum asked if the role of governors extended beyond meetings, to include networking with business forums for example.
- A culture of underinvestment in training by employers in England was identified as a barrier to implementing Leitch. There was some doubt expressed about what employers are going to get back from their investment – especially SMEs, who may have little to invest and want an urgent return for their money.
- Some felt that employers pay enough to government for training already through business tax and so on. It did not seem to be realistic to ask them to pay more.
- A solution might lie in first asking large employers to invest to set an example to SMEs. Though this could be difficult because they might feel that they could be training employees who then move on. So, the benefits of the wider picture need to be sold to them.
- The recent budget announcement that there would be extra money for some employers to invest in skills was welcomed.
- One way of attracting business investment is for colleges to specialise more. Centres of Vocational Excellence (COVES) were mentioned as likely catalysts for improving communication between colleges and employers.
- Forum members knew that we should not focus entirely on what employers might require from Leitch. Learner and community needs still require addressing, and we must ensure that those outside the reach of level 2 & 3 are not ignored.
- It was suggested that there needs to be a better framework in place so governors can identify what local employers actually want. There could be a problem if there is disagreement about what employers want and what learners want to study.
- Everybody was agreed that the issues identified by Leitch are not unique to England. Countries across the world, including America, are facing similar problems and we must learn from each other.

TRAIN TO GAIN

- Some delegates felt that Train to Gain is working even though there have been mixed reports from various quarters. In some instances it was not fulfilling its declared remit – and existing training contracts are only just measuring up.
- It was also feared that public investment in Train to Gain contracts actually prevented employers from making the contributions that should be expected.
- There was general agreement that Train to Gain is not working for colleges. The system of brokers is not sufficiently high profile in the learning & skills sector and entrepreneurial skills still fall short of what staff and government demand. But the ability to take risks and think outside the box is curtailed by restrictions on funding.

NEW SKILLS

- It became obvious that more support is required for boards to get extra business and investment from employers and that colleges were not aware of the opportunities available to them. For example, colleges that offer training to employers on their premises can be an effective means of encouraging training. And the consequent reduced travel means a cost saving for business.
 - There was no doubt that there needs to be an investment in the skills of FE staff and governors if colleges are to be successful in a demand-led environment. There also needs to be extra training to help colleges and providers look outwards and work in partnership for the benefit of the community – whilst still competing with each other for what might be on offer.
 - Other suggestions to improve FE-Business links were put forward: colleges could cultivate successful business teams who are able to go into companies and sell training, for example.
- This would require teachers/lecturers being trained in marketing skills so that they are able to make a good commercial and educational case for their courses. Colleges cannot force employers to say they want a better skilled workforce.
 - On the whole, delegates felt that FE should start from the position that there is some good practice around and not operate from a negative assumption that corporation governors and staff need to develop their skills or are not up to the job. There are, after all, effective CPD programmes in force for lecturers and managers to learn from employers – work exchange schemes help college staff learn what is needed by business/industry and vice versa.

RISKS

- The forum recognised that new contracting arrangements could lead to colleges losing established franchises/contracts.
 - The demand-led environment was seen as a very commercial concept and it is difficult for colleges to meet employer-generated demand. Colleges tend to avoid situations where there is a demand for provision that has a high front-end capital investment.
 - Generally, FE was resigned to an ever-changing funding situation that prevents colleges from planning for long term development. But if government policy could allow for more than year-on-year funding, colleges could be prepared for future employer needs. However, competing for contracts does the exact opposite: colleges will only be able to plan for the length of the contracts available.
- There was some despondency reflected in the recognition that all movement was leading to a transfer of risk to the college and that FE will need to adjust its financial management to cope with it. Sadly, it was concluded that the current business model might not work properly.
 - Another risk highlighted was that principals are reluctant to see teaching staff on low hours at the beginning of the academic year to allow flexibility to pick up training for employers later in the year.

CHAPTER 3: SELF-REGULATION

WHAT WAS SAID



A FUTURE MODEL OF SELF-REGULATION

- It was felt that more time and consultation is required before agreeing on a final model for self-regulation; and that the framework should be robust enough to prevent any loopholes being exploited by unscrupulous institutions.
- The delegates noted that Option 3 of the self-regulation proposal that went to ministers seems to be the chosen one. This was for Combined Accountability – a hybrid model where AoC, ALP, LANDEX and 157 Group work together to create a new jointly ‘owned’ resource to regulate the sector. But the forum wanted to know who had made this decision (it was the recommendation of Sir George Sweeney’s study group who had been asked by the Secretary of State to come up with some proposals).
- But delegates favoured Option 2 Single Accountability – which would allocate all regulatory functions to a new body set up within the sector – because they saw a need for a new organisation to oversee self-regulation as old organisations bring with them old habits.
- The FE sector, it was claimed, needs to improve its ability to market itself and promote and share best practice. Poor provision is not widespread and it does not do the sector any favours to dramatise it.
- Self-regulation will require a fundamental change to people’s behaviour, that much was clear. It could not just be process driven as it is a major cultural change requiring people to think in a different way and managers need to empower people – and that will increase the risk element in a current risk-averse culture.
- The feeling was that the Annual Report should be developed to include, not only the financial status of a college but what progress had been made in all aspects of its work – including reports from the governors about the future development of the college and from the principal about educational successes.

Duplication, overlap and conflict must be eradicated: the LSC will need to step back to allow colleges to develop the structures that will facilitate good governance in self-regulation

- The ability of colleges to tackle poor performance in the future was called into question; and whether they would have the power to close down other colleges?

CLARIFICATION REQUIRED

- Different interpretations were evident regarding the number of options available for self-regulation and that consultation and explanation was required.
- It was felt that there is a role for external financial audits of colleges even in a self-regulated world.
- Likewise, external assessments can be useful for colleges to question practice. It may not necessarily be beneficial to stop using them altogether.
- A question was raised regarding the bureaucratic practices that self-regulation would replace and whether it would be effective.

- A formal set of questions and answers is needed – such as what would happen in a self-regulated world if a college ‘went to the wall’ and how will self-regulation be piloted?
- Delegates felt that there needs to be an explanation of how the model for self-regulation would actually work in practice, as the current model isn’t easy to understand anyway. There is a danger that people will believe self-regulation is about withdrawing regulation. And if this is so, they wanted to know what would fill the gap.

OTHER AGENCIES

- It was felt that self-regulation has to be the main driver for FE governance. It should ultimately bring a steep change in the amount of bureaucracy and an increase in the trust given to the sector.
- The future role of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in a self-regulated world was questioned: how do self-regulation and the LSC sit together?

- There was clear agreement that streamlining sector bodies was required and their roles should be simplified and understood. Duplication, overlap and conflict must be eradicated: the LSC will need to step back to allow colleges to develop the structures that will facilitate good governance in self-regulation.
- Delegates agreed on the need for simplifying and reviewing audit requirements, clarifying what the audit is for. The way the accounts are prepared and presented now does not inform the public about the organisation’s financial status and how it has progressed – indeed it tends to confuse. LSC can give assurance through a simple certification process. There is no need for both internal and external auditors. Reduce and Simplify was the rallying cry!

CHAPTER 4: RESPONSES FROM THE SECTOR



CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP LYNNE SEDGMORE CBE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Forum raised a number of key recommendations that CEL will be taking forward.

As a result of the successes in FE, college governing boards are now providing for communities both at home and abroad. Boards that have a diversity of skills, backgrounds and experience are the most likely to prosper in this environment. This year, for our part, we will be launching a new *recruitment and diversity* section to the Governance Good Practice Guide (GGPG) (www.ggpg.org.uk). This will provide free advice and support for boards looking to recruit the very best governors and senior managers.

We will also provide new one-to-one personal training and coaching to help boards retain and develop those new to governance. In addition, we plan two new Leadership Skills for Governance (LSG) training workshops to help boards not only to understand the benefits of diversity and equality but also to self-assess progress on these issues.

It was clear from the Forum that the role of the governor requires definition. The *roles and responsibilities* section on the GGPG has helped facilitate the sector's understanding of the role, and we hope to work with our colleagues at LLUK and DfES to help formalise the qualities and skills required from a modern governor.

It was clear, too, that the skills of governors and senior managers might require further support and development if they are to take full advantage of the opportunities outlined in the Leitch report. We hope that our new look LSG programme, to be launched in September, will facilitate this. We also hope to create a dialogue between governors and business that will help to implement Leitch. This will get underway at our summer Governance Skills Summits and at our employer engagement Good Governance Forum at Wembley stadium in October.

The ultimate goal for all of our governance activity is to prepare boards for self-regulation

The ultimate goal for all of our governance activity is to prepare boards for self-regulation. The Forum has asked for more advice on self-regulation and self-assessment and this will be available from our GGPG and new LSG workshops when launched in September. We will also use our network of regional and national events to discuss progress and the intelligence gained will shape the support we offer for governing boards.

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

The Department welcomes the opportunity provided by the Good Governance Forum to discuss key policy issues with governors, the strategic leaders of the college sector. This continuing dialogue is of vital importance as the sector meets the major challenges facing it – including the ongoing transformation of the FE system as it implements Leitch and moves to self-regulation. Governors have a major role to play in addressing and meeting these challenges.

Recruitment and diversity of governing bodies raises interesting ideas. We are working with the Leadership Skills for Governance Team [Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL)] to develop actions in support of recruitment practice and promote diversity amongst governing bodies. We will want to consider the ideas generated by the Forum, in particular the areas where national support has been identified, to make sure we can respond appropriately.

The need for new skills for governors and the college workforce is highlighted in the discussion on the implementation of Leitch, especially as they deal with the move towards a demand-led system. We, along with the LSC, QIA, CEL and LLUK, are keen to work with the sector to develop its capacity to respond. We are working on a programme of support for providers to enable them to plan effectively for this transformed future and to develop their organisations, their business plans and their staff to meet the challenge.

The report on self-regulation highlights the need for greater communication and consultation with governors and for clarification in a number of areas. We agree that building a self-regulatory system presents real challenges and will necessitate a cultural shift in the sector. Uppermost will be the need to ensure that the model for self-regulation meets the needs of customers – learners and employers. But we also want governors, managers, teachers, trainers and support staff to see and feel improvements. Governors will play an important role developing and delivering in a self-regulatory system and your views will need to be taken into account as it progresses.

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL
ROB WYE, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY
AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Further Education system is moving into an exciting phase of development with significant opportunities as well as challenges presented by the ambitions of the Leitch Review of Skills. The LSC sees the role of governors as vital to meeting these challenges and in taking advantage of the opportunities, and it welcomes the dialogue with governors generated through the Good Governance Forum.

The report calls for the clarification of the role of the governing board and we agree that understanding the board's role as we move to a self-regulated, demand-led environment is a fundamental requirement. This will allow the focus of governor recruitment and retention to be on ensuring the right mix of skills and experience to enable the board to be effective, and on widening the diversity of the pool from which governors are drawn. The work we started in *agenda for change* to improve the reputation of FE should be a key part of strategies designed to encourage a wider cross-section of the population to become involved in FE governance.

The report also highlights the need for investment in the skills of FE staff and governors in order to deliver the ambitions of the Leitch Review. We are currently undertaking a review of the supply side of Train to Gain, with partners and representative organisations, to inform the development of a capacity building package that will include support for governors. We value your input on these developments through the discussions at the Good Governance Forum.

We are committed to supporting the process of developing self-regulation for the FE system and recognise that this will change the relationship between the LSC and FE colleges. We want to continue the dialogue that has been established nationally, regionally and locally to ensure that together we can respond to the challenges and opportunities in a way that offers the best possible learning and skills outcomes for individuals, employers and communities.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AGENCY
ANDREW THOMSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

As lead strategic body for quality improvement in the further education system, QIA welcomes this report from the Good Governance Forum. Good governance is a key contributor to organisational success. Without good governance it is unlikely that organisations will perform at the highest levels.

We welcome the emphasis on attracting governors with the right skills rather than just 'role-specific representatives'. There would be value in further work to explore the kinds of skills needed by existing and potential governors. These include effective chairing to ensure that governors are fully involved in discussions and that their skills are properly utilised. We were uneasy at the recommendation that governors 'should be involved more in the day-to-day operation of the college'. It is important to recognise the differences between governance and management. This was highlighted helpfully in the sub-section on national support, with its call for the role of the governing body to be clarified.

The chapters on Leitch and self-regulation showed governors engaging with these important topics, though clearly these are early days and they may offer fruitful areas for further governor training. The favoured option of allocating all regulatory functions to a new body seems surprising and at odds with the movement towards genuine self-regulation.

In response to governors' issues raised by the paper, QIA will support the drive for self-regulation by finding answers to the questions about how this would lead to more efficient and better self-assessment for the benefit of students and employers. Our new programme, Support for Excellence, will be a big part of this, but so too will be our analysis of, and response to, these issues. Governing bodies will be critical for effective self-regulation as they have the key powers. QIA will develop support for all aspects of self-regulation.

We will also lead partners in the Improvement Strategy, and in response to Leitch have already initiated some support. QIA will lead thinking and consultation about what is needed to make reforms work. This will include accurate understanding and analysis of the issues that need addressing, for example in relation to business models and effective employer engagement.

ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES

JULIAN GRAVATT,
DIRECTOR OF FUNDING AND DEVELOPMENT

AoC, as the representative organisation for colleges, welcomes the opportunities created by the LSG programme to engage with college governance issues. A number of AoC board members and officers attended the event on 10th May 2007.

AoC will take forward a number of the issues raised at the forum, including:

- the challenge for the college sector in engaging with the issues in the Leitch review of skills
- work involved in developing college self-regulation
- the need to work with governing bodies and national agencies to promote the role of colleges to new governors
- the need to remove the obstacles that make it harder for governing bodies to retain governors.

AoC remains committed to working with chairs and governing bodies to develop the role and reputation of colleges – whether by participating in the events organised by CEL or through our chairs policy forum and new governors committee.

