

# MINUTES

## INSTITUTE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS & TECHNICAL EDUCATION BOARD

- Meeting title:** Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education Board
- Meeting date:** 08 May 2024
- Protective marking:** Official
- Board members present:** Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE (Chair) (via teleconference); Dr Kate Barclay; John Cope; Jennifer Coupland; Sir Peter Estlin; Mark McClennon MBE; Sir Robin Millar CBE (via teleconference); Neil Morrison; Professor Malcolm Press CBE; Bev Robinson CBE (via teleconference).
- IfATE officials present:** Beth Chaudhary, Strategy Director; Dr Rachel Cooper, Strategy Director; Rob Nitsch CBE, Delivery Director; Kristofer McGhee, General Counsel and Company Secretary; Avril Cooper, HR Director; David Wilson, Chief Financial Officer; Simon Love, Head of Governance; Head of Portfolio Management Office (via teleconference), (item 6 only); Head of Post-16 Delivery (via teleconference), (item 7 only).
- Other stakeholders present:** Sarah Maclean, Director, Skills Strategy & Engagement, DfE (via teleconference); Kiera Harper, Director, Technical Qualifications and Essential Skills, DfE (via teleconference) (AOB only).
- Apologies:** Dame Fiona Kendrick; Jane Hadfield.

## **Item 1. Welcome and introductions**

1. Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith (the Chair) welcomed board members and participating officials to the meeting.

## **Item 2. Declarations of conflict of interest**

2. The Chair asked board members whether they had any new declarations of conflict of interest to make. All board members recognised that should a potential or actual conflict arise by virtue of their other interests (outlined in the declaration of interests) then it must be raised at the outset of the relevant meeting which deals with the issue giving rise to the actual or potential conflict. No new declarations were made.
3. John Cope informed the board that, having been re-elected as a borough councillor, his declaration of interest will continue.

## **Item 3. Minutes and actions from the last meeting**

4. The board approved the minutes from the last meeting, held on 20 March 2024.
5. The board reviewed the action log, noting the progress on the open actions and agreeing to close the one action which had been recorded as concluded.

## **Item 4. CEO report, strategic risks and finance updates**

6. The CEO updated the board and strategic and significant matters. The CEO informed the board that she and Jonathan Mitchell had given oral evidence on 30 April to the House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee on their inquiry into “Skills for the future: apprenticeships and training”. The CEO was struck by the committee’s knowledge about IfATE and the skills system. The CEO also reported to the board on her visit with Neil Morrison to Germany to see the German skills system in action. Both reflected on the stability and consistency of the German system, and that the system was well established with employer input which they felt were real positives. Some of the differences they noted was the absence of focus on achievement rates and catering for apprentices with special education needs. The CEO also commented on the lengthy duration of some of the end-point assessments which was accepted as being part of the process. Neil Morrison reflected on the positivity the German system was viewed in by those who worked in it and that that was possible whilst still acknowledging there were areas that could be improved.
7. The board asked for further information on the progress regarding IfATE’s digital strategy and implementation. The board suggested that a future board meeting cover a deep dive into digital, IfATE’s adoption of new technology internal and support for its adoption in the skills system.
8. The board sought additional information on how the T Level would be built into the Advanced British Standard (ABS) and the equivalency between A Levels and T Levels. The board also requested an update on progress for developing the ABS. Sarah Maclean, DfE’s Director for Skills Strategy & Engagement confirmed the consultation had closed and DfE would be publishing a consultation response in due course. Sarah offered for the ABS team to provide an update at future board meeting which the board welcomed.
9. The board asked for further details regarding how lessons learned from the first wave of T Level procurement had been incorporated into the wave 2 procurement. Rob Nitsch explained that changes had been incorporated into the procurement and the contract itself, and this was on top of the content reviews which were already in train.

## **Item 5. Performance scorecard and measures**

10. The Strategy Director and the Head of the Portfolio Management Office introduced the item, explaining the proposed scorecard and measures had been developed based on the objectives the board had previously agreed, in line with the strategic guidance which was in the process of being agreed with DfE. They welcomed views and comments from the board.
11. The board discussed the proposed measures. The board sought further information on how the measures had been developed in relation to last year's measures, to help them understand the level of stretch. They were also keen to see more measures relating to outcomes and impact. The board were also keen to understand how the measures incorporated challenging targets regarding employer engagement, inputs and outputs and how this linked back to IfATE's strategic objectives.
12. The Chair suggested officials provide additional information on the measures and that the board undertake further discussion, if necessary, following the Chair's review to which the CEO agreed.

## **Item 6. Post-16 qualification reforms**

13. IfATE's Head of Post-16 Delivery presented the item. He was able to confirm awarding organisations would receive confirmation later in the month regarding those Level 2 qualifications which IfATE had approved for delivery. He went on to confirm that IfATE was cognisant of the key risks, such as how the reforms would affect adult qualifications offering and possible gaps in qualification provision.
14. The board questioned how future and forward-looking skills had been considered to ensure the approved qualifications would meet the future economy needs. The Head of Post-16 set out the engagement they had undertaken with employer groups and other stakeholders to identify those needs and then taking that demand to awarding organisations for them to create qualifications based on need, both at Level 2/3 but also at Levels 4 and 5.
15. The board questioned what steps were being taken to widen participation to ensure the qualifications were as accessible as possible to the widest possible pool of learners. The Head of Post-16 explained that the qualifications are broken down into occupational entry level and workplace accessible options. As the reforms progress, more options will become available. The Delivery Director added that there is some work to do regarding maths and English requirements to ensure learners can access their desired qualification.
16. The Chair thanked the Head of Post-16 for his time.

## **Item 7. IfATE people and places plan**

17. The CEO and the HR Director opened the item highlighting that the plan complements the Civil Service and DfE's draft people and places plan. The HR Director confirmed the intention for the plan to be updated following approval of the three-year strategy for 2024-27. Board members had recently provided feedback which would be incorporated into the next iteration.
18. The board sought timescales when DfE would finalise its plan. Sarah Maclean confirmed the plan would be ready in the summer and that there would be no changes regarding its priorities.

19. The board sought clarity regarding the place element of the plan. The CEO highlighted the six current locations where IfATE had a presence, explaining that a national presence was very positive, for example, in relation to the Civil Service places for growth programme.
20. The board were keen to understand the purpose and impact of the plan and suggested that a further discussion may be helpful to ensure board members could support the plan. The CEO and HR Director confirmed they would review the plan, in line with the feedback given and provide the board with an update in due course.

#### **Item 8. Matters arising from the papers for information and any other business**

21. Kiera Harper, DfE's Director for Technical Qualifications and Essential Skills joined the meeting via teleconference to update the board on the T Level action plan, highlighting the work completed to date and further work in train.
22. The board noted the financial aspects of T Levels had raised some concerns in the sector press. There was recognition the figures quoted didn't acknowledge the wider benefit of improved facilities now available to some students and local communities which were included as part of the implementation of T Levels.
23. The board reflected on the apprenticeship summary included in the papers. The CEO highlighted that completion rates were on the increase, an increased number of 'blue chip' firms were offering apprenticeships and that 70% of the economy was now accessible via apprenticeships.
24. The board questioned the data available regarding apprenticeship completions and remaining in employment. Sarah Maclean highlighted the work being undertaken by DfE's Unit for Future Skills to understand the growth sectors, the impact of AI and tapping into employer demand. Sarah offered to bring an item to a future board meeting to share with board members.
25. The Chair thanked Kristofer McGhee, General Counsel and Company Secretary, as this was his last board meeting before leaving IfATE. Board members added their thanks and appreciation for Kristofer's work.
26. The Chair thanked board members for their time and confirmed the next meeting would be held on 3 July.

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