

John Hayes MP

Minister of State for Further Education,
and Lifelong Learning

Chairs of FE College Corporations

Our ref:

Your ref:

22 February 2012

Dear Chairman,

I thought it would be helpful, at this important point in the development of the Further Education sector, to write to you about the significant and exciting opportunities and challenges facing you as you Chair a Further Education corporation. As Chair, you have a pivotal role to play in leading the reforms that we have set out in *New Challenges, New Chances*, published in December last year. My determination is for Further Education colleges, with an unprecedented degree of discretion, to become even more responsive to employer choice and still better at feeding economic growth and nourishing the common good.

It is you that will lead your governing body in taking a strategic, long term view of how your college can best meet the changing needs of the communities it serves. It is your role, with fellow governors and senior management teams, to ensure that you have a strategy in place which is followed through into robust planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is also your responsibility to work collectively in peer networks with other Chairs and Governors, and in creative partnerships across the post-14 education sector, to develop effective governance practice that will lead to a diverse, innovative and dynamic FE system.

This Government has spent the last 18 months stripping away unnecessary controls, obligation and administrative requirements on colleges that had been built up incrementally over the years. We have given colleges much greater freedom over their own governance and operations so that you can play your role more fully in your local communities and tailor your college's mission to that which best suits local circumstances. At the same time, these new freedoms and flexibilities confer accountabilities and responsibilities on college governors.

As Baroness Sharp's report '*A dynamic Nucleus*' (November 2011) emphasises, colleges need to be at the centre of their communities and on the front foot in demonstrating how they are actively responding to meet the needs of learners and employers, working in close partnership with other key stakeholders such as Local Enterprise Partnerships and others.

I recognise that this new landscape raises significant issues for you and your governing bodies on how to drive forward culture change and raise college aspirations, and it is therefore of critical importance that you, your fellow governors and senior staff consider what support you need, and can give to others, to take this agenda forward.

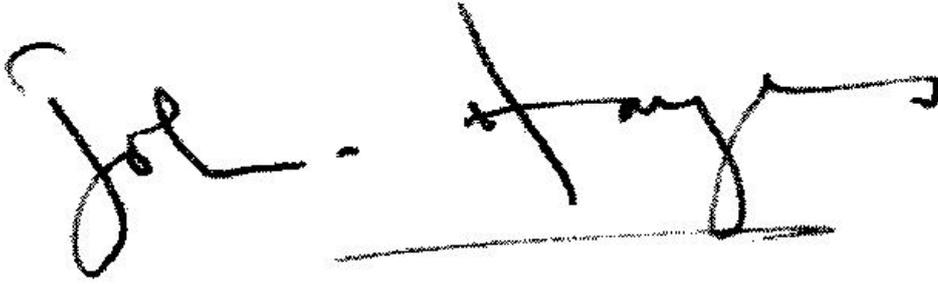
The Governance Summit on 29 February, hosted by the Association of Colleges, will provide an important first step in considering what support is needed, and how it might best be provided. I look forward to seeing many of you at this event. Your ideas will then be carried forward and discussed further at the annual LSIS governors conference in March, with a view to sector bodies working together to develop a flexible and sustained support programme that can be tailored to meet the needs of individual colleges.

I am also very keen to receive thoughts directly from you on what you think New Challenges, New Chances means for you, how you are taking it forward in your college, and what support you think would best meet your own needs and those of your colleagues. It would be helpful if you replied by 16 March to the RE Reform mail box (Fe.reform@bis.gsi.gov.uk) so that your ideas can be fed into the development work being led by the sector bodies.

As we move forward together, united in our determination to elevate further education, I thank you for your continuing commitment, hard work and investment of time in support of your college; and I look forward to hearing your views.

I am copying this letter to chairs of sixth form college corporations who will also be able to take advantage of greater freedoms, and the removal of unnecessary government control, better to respond to the needs of their students and communities. I look forward to hearing the views of representatives of sixth form colleges at the Governance Summit on 29 February about how they can best achieve this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Hayes', written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

JOHN HAYES

cc Chairs of sixth form college corporations and FE College Principals