

HONORARY AUDITORS' REPORT 2017/18

The ESFA Honorary Auditors (Neil Pont, Mark Warren, Allan Reed) visited ESFA Headquarters on 3rd May 2017.

During their visit they had meetings and discussions with the Chief Executive, the Chairman, the Chair of Trustees, the Finance Officer and other members of staff.

Their visit concentrated on the following topics:

- Finance
- Governance and Development Planning
- Performance Management
- Communication
- Football Activities

Finance

In attendance: A. Chilton, M.Coyne, A. Johnston, D.Howard

Discussions ranged widely over the financial structures of ESFA so the HAs deepened their understanding of the various funding streams for ESFA and the restrictions that apply to the allocation of these funds. It was apparent from the discussions that the Trustees are seeking to loosen ESFA's reliance on funding from The FA. The on-going constitutional reform could make the organisation better placed to seek a more varied portfolio of financial partners.

It was stressed that, in their role as currently defined, it was not the HAs place to investigate the financial regularity of the organisation. This task lies with the Professional Auditors.

The HAs raised concerns from Regional Associations that there was no allocation of funding to these associations within the current budget stream.

Governance and Development Planning

In attendance: A. Chilton, M. Coyne, A. Johnston

The group considered the Development Plan as outlined on p.10 of the Governance Handbook, 2016/17. The CEO led discussions on progress being made on all 23 points of this plan. The HAs noted that good progress is being made across a wide range of initiatives that, together, form a coherent plan.

Performance Management

Discussions were held with 3 members of staff (K. Laverick, A. Weston. D.Howard) to investigate the process of Performance Management. The HAs are confident that robust processes are in place for the management of staff.

Communication

In attendance: A. Chilton, A. Johnston

Discussions concentrated on direct communication from Council to membership and the ESFA website. The HAs commended the "Membership Matters" newsletters. It was suggested that, after each Council Meeting, a summary of key discussions and decisions could be distributed to membership.

The Chief Executive gave a detailed explanation of plans to refresh the ESFA website.

Football Activities

The HAs had one-to-one discussions with A. Weston, D.Ebberson and D. Alcock about their work.

Frustrations were noted about the relationship with the Premier League - especially with the introduction of the heavily funded Primary Stars scheme into which ESFA had had little input.

The development of the role of County Administrators was discussed.

Issues were raised over some disciplinary matters (in relation to follow-up on reports of inappropriate behaviour by team managers).

SUMMARY

The Honorary Auditors would like to thank all staff and Council members involved in their visit for the warm welcome they received and the efficient and willing way in which all their queries were answered.

It is clear that the staff are well led and that the affairs of the association are being cared for in a thoughtful and positive way.

There are many difficulties and frustrations - especially with regard to the restrictive nature of the current funding streams. The organisation and place of school football in the wider football community is forever changing and the way forward is not always an easy one to see and negotiate. In particular, it is apparent that the role of representative school football is facing many challenges.

The Honorary Auditors are confident that the association is well-placed to meet the on-going challenges.

(N Pont / M Warren / A Reed)