NOTE OF KEY POINTS

- The **Capital budget review** was underway and initial findings would be brought to the Council's meeting in early March.
- The contract transfer from Liberata to Capita as part of the **EMA transition plan** had gone smoothly. Residual issues to be resolved were around inherited systems, data reliability and supplier dependencies.
- Council noted that the **National Audit Committee** had two new members (Sally Hopson and John Taylor).
- In an update on the refreshed **Risk Management** process, Council noted that the list of top corporate risks had been increased to seven. The process had become more dynamic and was involving a wider range of people. There were still concerns around assessment of risk level, but these were being addressed.
- There had been some progress in terms of **MoG changes**: a transition plan had been agreed and was awaiting formal sign off; David Cragg (Regional Director, West Midlands) had been appointed to head up the transition work; the advert for the YPLA Chair was to appear very shortly in the press. Royal Assent for the Bill was expected in October.
- No major concerns were reported in the **Finance and Performance** report, although there was a small emerging pressure around 16-18 FE and Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities budgets. A suite of actions led to a forecast year end position of a balanced budget. Performance of adult apprenticeships was going well, although there had been a decrease in the number of young people beginning an apprenticeship. Providers were keen to look at any additional actions that could be put in place to halt the slowdown.
- Council member Claire Ighodaro gave a progress report on the internal review she had been asked to conduct into **Education Maintenance Allowances**. A full report would be brought to the Council's meeting in March but in the meantime Council noted the scope and remit of the review.
- The **Apprenticeships Online** website was now up and running, and was populated with around 5,000 vacancies. The advertising campaign headed by Sir Alan Sugar was to begin in February, with a series of national and regional underpinning events to take place alongside the main campaign. Challenges continued to be around: impact of the economic downturn; retention; ensuring flexibility in the programme; 16-18 performance.
- The **Train to Gain** service had been awarded "key brand" status by the Government for support for business.
- Council noted two “for information” papers on **Raising the Age of Participation** and **Employer Engagement**.
- A paper detailing the **accountability arrangements for the Chief Executive of the NAS** was noted. Council also noted that the postholder was a Departmental, rather than an LSC, employee.
- Finally, the Chair thanked HEFCE Chief Executive **David Eastwood** for his time as an observer on the Council. David had accepted a new post as Vice Chancellor of Birmingham University so this would be his last Council meeting.