

12.48.02 College Self Assessment Report 2010/11 (12.24.02)

Substantial revision of the College Self Assessment Report (SAR) had almost been completed and the latest draft of the Background, Summary of Grades and Cross College judgements was tabled for information. The SAR would be resubmitted in the near future and the final version brought to the next meeting.

Act: GB/NJ

Governors were informed that the SAR was now very different from the previous version and presented a bleak but honest picture demonstrating that the College was aware of its weaknesses and staff had ownership of the issues.

12.48.03 Implications of the Education Act 2011 and adoption of the Foundation Code of Governance (12.37)

A summary of the processes by which staff and student views were obtained would be published on the College website once finalised. The Search and Governance (S&G) Committee would review actions relating to the Foundation Code of Governance at its next meeting.

Act: NJ/S&G Ctte

12.48.04 Clerk (12.39.01)

The Clerk post was to be advertised in the near future with interviews scheduled for Tuesday 10th July. The panel would consist of Ms Bowker, Mr Cobain and Ms Tyler.

12.48.05 Remodelling of the Learning Exchange (12.38.02)

The Board received a report from the Vice Principal Finance and Corporate Resources (VPFCR) on progress with the Learning Exchange (LEx) and Clarence Street remodelling proposals.

At the last meeting the Board had discussed a tabled proposal to create more seminar rooms at the LEx in order to facilitate the creation of the sixth form centre. The Board had given approval in principle to branding of the sixth form centre (City 6). Approval had also been given for the remodelling of the (LEx) and Clarence Street to be progressed, subject to details of costings being reviewed by a task group of two or more members of the Finance, Estates and General Purposes Committee. It did not prove possible to hold a meeting but individual meetings were held with Peter Grieve and Tony Cearn's to discuss the rationale and costings and other members were e-mailed the information.

Following those discussions, both Mr Grieve and Mr Cearn's had given approval for the LEx project, based on the information they had received. The Estates department was subsequently instructed to proceed with the LEx programme on that basis.

Details of the remodelling of Clarence Street would be brought to the next Board meeting for approval. It was proposed to upgrade the Science laboratories, soundproof the ceilings above the labs and make provision for learning zones on each floor. It was anticipated that the bulk of remodelling could be achieved by the start of the new academic year. Ways of involving College students were being explored.

Mr Cearn's joined the meeting at this point.

When asked whether the new sixth form concept was being incorporated into the current admissions process it was confirmed that there was an ongoing City 6 marketing programme which included advertising in Liverpool One, an on-street campaign and radio advertising.

Governors felt that the remodelling of the LEx and Clarence Street centres was a small part of a bigger package and a comprehensive property strategy driven by a curriculum strategy should be brought to the Board for approval. **Act: SMT**

The Board recorded their appreciation to Peter Grieve and his colleagues at Laing O'Rourke for their ongoing support and assistance.

It was agreed to take item 2 at this point. All staff other than the Principal and Clerk were asked to withdraw.

12.49 Appointment of Vice Principal Curriculum

Governors noted a report from the Clerk.

Part of this minute is confidential and held by the Clerk.

Ms Dove arrived during this item.

It was agreed to appoint Gill Banks as Vice Principal Curriculum with effect from 1st June 2012.

Staff returned to the room and Ms Banks was congratulated on her appointment.

12.50 Outcomes from staff 'Have Your Say' workshops; Update on the organisational Transformation programme; Three Year Action Plan: People Update

Ms Kehoe-Perkinson tabled a report and presented feedback from the 'Have Your Say' workshops which she had facilitated during April 2012 and which over 400 staff had attended. Additional feedback had been received via email from staff unable to attend workshops. These had provided the opportunity for staff to input views on what worked well in the College, what aspects made their jobs difficult and what the College should start doing, ie priorities for the future. They were also asked for views on the Curriculum structure.

A wide range of comments had been received and some key themes were apparent. Performance management processes were felt to be weak; many non-teaching staff did not have structured personal development plans; there were no clear career or progression routes. Another common theme was that there were some unnecessarily bureaucratic processes. The 'Best Value' business support staff exercise had impacted negatively and people felt disaffected. In some areas it was apparent that both staff and managers needed clarity on what behaviours and standards were acceptable; some managers had not had basic supervisory skills training. To preserve the confidentiality of the sessions, Ms Kehoe-Perkinson had not included specific comments in her presentation but was able to illustrate that some staff had experienced poor leadership.

There were also lots of positive and practical suggestions offered. Many attendees liked their direct team relationships and appreciated those college systems that worked well.

Ms Kehoe-Perkinson's recommendations included rigorous 'good behaviour' role modelling from the Senior Management Team (SMT)/Board downwards. A number of issues could be easily resolved and these 'quick wins' would demonstrate a commitment to engaging with staff. Some issues might be more to do with perception than reality so it was essential to communicate the reality. Bureaucratic impediments to staff carrying out their roles should be removed where possible to enable people to concentrate on their own performance. College management should continue with listening workshops and acting on feedback and implement a communication cascade. Supervisory skills training should be put in place. The Principal's briefings could be widened to include brief reports to staff from all functions in the College. Issues raised by staff regarding terms and conditions should be considered and there should be a more accessible health and wellbeing programme.

Governors queried how the recommendations would be integrated and operationalised to become sustainable since their own commercial experience had shown transformation programmes needed to run over years rather than months. Ms Kehoe-Perkinson felt there were a number of initiatives already in progress; the SMT each had project scorecards and individuals were accountable for driving key changes. One scorecard project was the Performance Management process. Job role profiles now included the High Performing Organisation attributes defined by the Board. Development of a new staff performance management programme was well underway.

It was queried what support would be available to managers during the restructure programme. The Principal would meet with any manager who wished to do so. The College counselling service and Human Resources team were also available as well support from an outplacement company. The deadline for voluntary redundancy applications had been extended by a week following a request from the University and College Union.

Ms Carmichael joined the meeting during the above item.

The Board thanked Ms Kehoe-Perkinson for her contribution. Progress to date on the 'Have Your Say' engagement was noted, as were the recommendations made to the SMT. Governors concurred that the Board should participate in an appraisal system; this would be considered by the Search and Governance Committee. **Act: NJ/S&G Ctte**

The Board also noted a progress report on the Transformation Programme and the three year Action Plan People initiatives.

12.51 Principal's Report

In her report the Principal described various projects and developments, many of which raised the profile and afforded potential growth for the College.

The staff governors responded positively to the implementation of the Customer Relationship Management system but queried whether the necessary staffing resources would be in place to ensure its effective operation for 2012-13 admissions. The Principal advised that it would require careful project management; although the system was not yet fully operational, a tracking system was in place which had already reduced the time between application and interview from twelve weeks down to three.

Ms Kehoe-Perkinson left the meeting at this point.

In answer to a query, the Principal said that in discussions with potential partners she was making it clear that the College was aware of its weaknesses and that a programme of improvement was underway.

Governors expressed concern that the number of new ventures might further increase the Principal's workload but were assured that responsibilities would be delegated to new Senior Post Holders and many of the ventures came with their staff, eg the Studio School would have its own staff and management.

12.52 Three Year Action Plan: Student Performance Update

The Assistant Principal Curriculum 14-19 (APC) updated the Board on the work ongoing to improve student performance and success. More rigour and accountability had been introduced to course reviews. The APC and Ms Lynne Caddick (consultant for quality improvement and success) had attended meetings with Head of Sections which had focussed on student attendance/withdrawals and projected success rates. Rigorous action plans had been produced but there was still work to be done.

The window for lesson observations had been extended to cover the whole academic year and 'walk through' observations had been introduced. Whilst the overall percentage of Good or Better observations appeared to be lower than previous years, there had been an improvement in the rigour and quality of the process. 75 staff had signed up for the voluntary peer observation programme.

In 2012/13 attendance figures would be presented to the SMT on a monthly basis. Governors asked what measures were in place for persistent non-attendance and the On-Track Review process was highlighted; this had an emphasis on supporting rather than penalising students. 16-18 year old attendance had been identified as requiring close monitoring.

The Board was pleased to see that in year retention had increased by an average of 5.7% compared to the previous year. It was noted that this was the first significant success in improving retention in recent years, although it was not yet clear whether it would have an adverse impact on achievement and thus success rates.

Withdrawal requests were being tightly monitored and dealt with via Faculty and Curriculum Management Team meetings with fortnightly reports to SMT. Governors asked about the financial impact of withdrawing students and the VPFCR briefly explained how the funding mechanisms worked in that respect.

Although accepting that the actions and processes had become more refined, governors were keen to understand what other measures were in place or in progress. The APC advised that staff would be developed on personal and professional levels with areas for improvement being fed into CPD (Continuing Professional Development). Behavioural issues would require support from HR.

12.53 Safe College – Spring term 2012 Update

The Board noted a report from the AP Student Services and Support (APSS&S) on Safe College including Protection of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. The appendix contained details of the 20 cases dealt with during the spring term.

There had been a significant increase in the number of cases of suspected abuse or neglect due to: increased staff awareness of reporting procedures, and an increase in the number of cases where financial, health or housing issues had impacted on a student's well being. Increased financial and welfare advice services were planned for September 2012. Action was being taken to address significant gaps in the application process for 14-16 year olds regarding safeguarding and the sharing of information from schools as well as supervision arrangements. Extensive staff training had taken place and more was planned for the end of term.

Ms Carmichael had recently become the link governor for Safeguarding and had met with the APSS&S. Both of them were keen to establish governor specific safeguarding training and also to ascertain what governors wanted from the Safe College reports.

Governors remarked that the Safe College report helped them to appreciate the issues staff and students had to deal with. In respect of the format, some governors felt they would like to know the outcomes of the incidents as the report only recorded up to referral point; others felt they only needed to know that incidents had been dealt with correctly. It was also pointed out that, once students had been referred to external agencies, it was difficult to receive further information for reasons of confidentiality. It was agreed that, since there could potentially be an impact on retention and progress, where possible governors should be informed whether students remained on their courses after the issue was referred. The APSS&S would be asked to add another column to record this. **Act: APSS&S**

12.54 Tuition Fee Policy 2012/13

In his report the VPF&CR set out the proposed tuition fee policy for 2012/13. The College needed to set fees and waivers at financially viable levels, the policy had to be competitive with others in the sector and also consider the financial limitations of students. In principle, the College charged adult tuition fees for any agency funded provision, where these were due. In respect of Apprenticeships, in order to remain competitive, in many cases fees were not charged.

Governors asked about the level of fees collected and the VPFCR confirmed it was in the region of £460k-£470k. It was asked whether the fees were clearly communicated to students in advance although it was accepted that due to their complexity this was difficult. This appeared to be borne out across the sector as it was difficult to find FE fees explicitly stated on college websites although HE fees were relatively well publicised.

The Board approved the fee pricing strategy as outlined in the report.

Cllr Small left the meeting at this point.

12.55 Three Year Action Plan: Growth - Update

The Principal's report provided an update on key developments: potential acquisitions and contracts, growth in apprenticeships and reduced reliance on those provided through partnerships, growth of the College's commercial arm and potential opportunities for partnership at an international level.

The Principal was keen to expand the volume of provision that was not reliant on funding agencies or partnerships. However, the Board needed to have a debate on the merits or otherwise of acquisitions...*[part of this minute is deemed confidential as it contains third party or commercially sensitive information. Please contact the Clerk for further details].*

Ms Barry left the meeting at this point.

The College was in dialogue with a number of overseas education establishments looking to develop collaborative partnerships. However, the Principal advised the Board that, although international opportunities had been tentatively explored, it was felt too much of a distraction to actively pursue in the immediate future; governors agreed with this assertion.

Governors asked if the expansion of catering provision had led to increased pressure on College staff and suggested that establishment of a trading company would isolate risk; a social enterprise model might be a valid alternative. The Principal commented that, although the catering provision brought an income, most importantly it provided opportunities for apprentices and helped to build commercial links.

12.56 Agency Funding Allocations 2012/13

The Board noted from the VPF&CR's report that the College had now received the final Skills Funding Agency allocation and the Education Funding Agency's Allocation statement for 2012/13.

Disappointingly, the EFA funding had been significantly reduced as a result of a reduced number target (226 less than for 2011/12), decline in success rates and decline in programme width. Although some reduction was inevitable due to sector cuts, the 16-18 funding reduction was partly self inflicted because A level students for 2011/12 had been enrolled in the summer term of 2010/11. The College was now concentrating on growth in this area. The reduced funding was partly mitigated by significant improvement in SFA funding.

12.57 Action Plan from 'Leading Quality Improvement Workshop

The action plan was still a work in progress and would go to the next Search and Governance (S&G) Committee meeting so this item was deferred until the 26th June Board meeting. Key performance indicators would be discussed at the S&G Committee meeting and Mr Cobain requested to be sent copies of the strategic plan, Senior Post Holder objectives and similar materials in advance.

Act: NJ

12.58 Performance Dashboard

The Board noted the performance Dashboard in relation to financial indicators. All indicators were currently 'Green' with the exception of the cash based operating surplus (Amber) which was prudently forecast to be £686k less than plan; plans were in place to improve this position.

12.59 Current Significant Risks

A summary of the current significant risks requiring close management was provided by the VPFCR. The key risks related to student performance and potential for loss of 'Outstanding' status, reduction in numbers for 16-18 learner responsive numbers in 2012/13, capacity for growing Apprenticeship numbers, impact of increased tuition fees for higher education paid for by Student Loans, dependency on partnerships, financial status, reduced capacity of management team and the impact on staff of organisational change.

Governors were advised that so far eight colleges in the North West had lost their Outstanding status under the new Ofsted inspection framework. It was anticipated that the revised SAR would trigger an inspection sooner; although signs of improvement were apparent, because data would be taken from over a three year period, this would have limited impact. In addition, improved success and retention rates this year would not be validated until January 2013 so could not be included if the College was inspected before that time.

The report was noted.

12.60 Draft Audit Committee Minutes – 15th March 2012

Minutes of the Audit Committee were noted. The Chair of the Committee reported that discussions with the internal auditors were still underway as to which areas would be audited in light of the growth and transformation projects.

12.61 Confidentiality of Items

Item 2 Aspects of discussion of appointment of the Vice Principal Curriculum which contained personal information.

Item 9 Appendix to the Safe College – Spring term 2012 report.

Item 11 Aspects of the Growth Update relating to acquisitions (contains commercial and third party information)

12.62 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 26th June 2012 at 4.15pm

All staff other than the Principal and Clerk left the meeting at this point.

12.63 Confidential Minutes of the Board meetings held on 20th March and 11th May 2012

These were agreed as a correct record.

12.64 Matters arising from the Confidential Minutes

12.64.1 Management Team Restructure (12.49)

The Principal was asked how staff had responded to the announcement of the management restructure. She replied that it had come as a shock to the staff currently in posts that would be disestablished, but the overwhelming response from staff in general had been positive.

The fact that savings would be reinvested in staffing had gone down well.

The next whole college staff event would be held on Friday 15th June 2012 and it would be useful if governors could attend.

The meeting closed at 7.05pm.