

Minutes of the Board meeting
held on 3rd September 2013 at 4.30pm

Present:

Ms Sue Carmichael
Mr Tony Cobain
Ms Clare Crowther
Mr John Denny
Ms Claire Dove
Mr Peter Grieve
Ms Vivienne Lacey
Mr Ian Pollitt
Councillor Nick Small
Ms Vivienne Tyler (Chair)
Mr David Wilson

External Governors

Ms Elaine Bowker

Principal

Ms Martha Harris

Staff Governor – Teaching

Mr Aaron Booth

Student Governor/President of Student's Union

Mr Daniel Hayes

Student Governor

In Attendance:

Ms Gill Banks

Vice Principal Curriculum

Mr David Brennan

Vice Principal Partnerships & Business Development

Ms Angela Cox

Deputy Principal

Mr David McIntyre

Vice Principal Finance & Corporate Resources

Ms Christine Lenderyou

Clerk to the Board

13.138 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everybody to the first Board meeting of the new academic year.

13.139 Apologies

Ms Barry, Mr Lazenbury, Mr Nolan and Professor Pillay sent apologies. Mr Hayes sent apologies for late arrival and Councillor Small gave apologies for his early departure.

13.140 Declarations of Interest

Ms Dove and Ms Tyler had an interest in item 4, Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Principal and Mr Grieve had an interest in item 9, Principal's Report, which referred to the University Technical College (UTC).

All staff members had an interest in item 14 – Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy.

The Principal, Councillor Small, the VPFCR and the VPPBD all had an interest in item 16, First 4 Skills Update, as they were all directors of the company.

13.141 Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

Ms Tyler left the meeting for the duration of this item and the Principal chaired the meeting in her absence.

The Board discussed the requirement for strong leadership during challenging times, as well as the time commitment and dedication required. The Board decided to re-appoint Ms Tyler as Chair and Ms Dove as Vice-Chair for a further two years, until September 2015.

Ms Tyler re-joined the meeting with Ms Dove joining the meeting and were advised of the Board's decision.

13.142 Any Other Business

The Board agreed that they would like to receive a verbal update on the Student Union's activities from Mr Booth.

13.143 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 2nd July 2013 and 23rd July 2013 were agreed as a true record.

13.144 Outcome of Actions from Previous Meeting

13.10 Principal's Report

It was suggested that the Student Union could be used to facilitate shadowing of students by governors.

13.46 Performance Dashboard

The VPPBD advised that he would like to extend the action point and bring a revised Performance Dashboard which was aligned with the new strategic plan to the Strategic Planning event in September and asked that governors contact him with any suggestions. **Act: DB/Govs**

13.136 Three Year Financial Plan

The VPFCR advised that the Three Year Financial Plan had not been included within the Budget report (agenda item 10). Governors agreed it should be circulated separately. **Act: DMcl**

All other items were either complete or on-going. The report was noted.

13.145 Post-Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) Monitoring Report

Following the Ofsted inspection which took place in February, the College was required to complete a PIAP as a result of its inadequate grading. Progress against the PIAP would then be monitored. The Deputy Principal advised that since the PIAP update had been prepared, the Internal Auditors had given a positive report regarding the plan's approach and robustness.

While there were 27 items rated as red, the Board were assured that there was no cause for concern; it was explained that there were some timing or sequencing issues and some items were delayed due to the installation of Pro Monitor. In addition, the new Head of Learning had recently been appointed.

Governors were informed that management were taking a cautious approach to recording progress. Training on Pro Monitor was being rolled out; the Board agreed that improved management information and students being able to monitor their own progress would be invaluable

The report was noted.

Mr Denny joined the meeting during this item.

13.146 Principal's Report

The Principal reported that the recent case conference had been positive and tabled a document which had been presented showing the progress the College had made. Bryan Davies, the Ofsted link inspector, had attended and his independent perspective had been helpful.

Initial information suggested a modest improvement in success rates although it was not at the rate which had been hoped for. In contrast the student experience had significantly improved. The Principal emphasised that success rates and student experience were inherently linked and there was now a strong foundation for improving success rates on a sustainable basis. The last inspection had followed a year of improved success rates, but the student experience had not improved sufficiently to

warrant good inspection grades. While there continued to be a spiky profile across the College, the Principal was confident that performance had largely improved across the College, and that the student experience for 13/14 would be a significant improvement on previous years. Governors noted that progress for apprenticeships was not at the same rate as for Learner Responsive Courses. The Board were informed that although retention had been closely monitored throughout the year, the work undertaken to improve CIS had confirmed a lower retention figure than previously anticipated. This was disappointing and underlined the requirement for accurate management information and the importance of the CIS improvement project.

Enrolment figures were above those for the same period last year. The Application Management System had worked well despite some blips, and there was a good flow of management information from the system. Feedback from staff and students was positive. The College would need to wait for the outcome of the Ofsted monitoring visit before it could assess whether it would be possible to increase its student loan allocation.

Governors were pleased to hear of the UTC's progress and noted Mr Grieve's contribution.

The Principal gave a verbal report on the use of zero hour contracts. The College had historically used Protocol to provide temporary staff but had decided instead to create its own pool of staff that could be utilised when required. While it was appreciated zero hour contracts were a sensitive issue, the College needed to have flexibility in order to respond to changes in demand. The College had signed up to the Liverpool MPs' voluntary code of practice regarding zero hour contracts and would give staff as much notice as practically possible. The Principal stressed that staff from the temporary pool would not be paid less than full time staff for teaching activity and would receive payment as part of their hourly rate for equivalent holidays to permanent teaching. Governors expressed support for the rationale on the understanding that this was taken forwards in line with the College's principles and values. The Principal would forward to governors the letter she had sent to local MP, Luciana Berger.

Act: EB

13.147 Budget Update

This minute has been deemed confidential. Please contact the Clerk to the Board for further details.

13.148 Performance Dashboard

The VPPBD confirmed that there had been 3,000 early enrolments which, as well as giving students confidence that they had secured a place, meant that a substantial volume of enrolments had been removed from the last three weeks, leading to a significantly smoother process for staff and students.

There had been 830 apprenticeship starts against a target of 910. The target was to grow apprenticeship provision by 25%. Overall it had grown by 15%, with in-house provision growing by 43%. While the overall growth target had not been met, governors were advised that this was within a context of falling volumes of apprenticeship starts for young people across the country. Governors asked that whether the raising of the participation age to 17 would have an impact. The VPPBD pointed to statistics which showed that 48% of 16 year olds attended a sixth form whereas only 30% of 17 year olds did and this emphasised the need for students to be on the right route.

The report was noted.

13.149 Performance Review 3

Governors had requested more information regarding in-year performance. The Performance Review dashboard had been introduced mid-cycle in 2012-13 and would be revised at successive PR sessions provide more detail on priority areas. Performance Review 3 had taken place in June so some of the information had changed since then, for example predicted success rates or retention figures.

Governors were asked for their opinions on the format and while it was generally found to be helpful, governors agreed with the Deputy Principal that the grading criteria needed to be developed further. It was also commented that the report should be cross referenced with the Performance Dashboard to ensure that information was consistent and not duplicated.

The report was noted.

13.150 Risk Management

Two new risks had been added: 13/01 relating to commercial income targets and 13/02 relating to pastoral support. Governors were advised that the criteria for financial support were being applied vigorously but would be monitored as there was a risk of disadvantaging some students or impacting on inclusivity. Governors were pleased to hear that the College's level of support offered remained comparable to other colleges.

The report was noted.

Councillor Small left the meeting during this item.

13.151 Environmental and Sustainability Policy

Governors were pleased to receive a policy that was much improved from the last time it was presented. As the policy included a number of measurable targets, governors asked whether the College would audit its current position so the starting point was known. The VPFCR advised that this would be the case and the Assistant Principal for Technical and Enterprise had volunteered to chair the group, referencing the overlap with the curriculum. Governors accepted that implementing some aspects of the policy may be subject to the College's financial position.

The policy was approved.

13.152 Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy

Governors felt the revised policy was much more straight-forward and acknowledged that it took into account new legislation. It was suggested that a review date should be included (three years or sooner if required due to changes in legislation). Governors queried whether the aim of the policy "to make the best possible appointment" should be more prominent and whether the policy sufficiently allowed for a judgement on capturing whether a candidate was able to deliver an impact for the College. Ms Lacey was due to meet with the College's Interim HR Director and the Board agreed to delegate final approval of the policy to Ms Lacey.

Act: VL

13.153 Staff Survey

This minute has been deemed confidential until the results are communicated to staff. Please contact the Clerk to the Board for further details.

The report was noted.

13.154 First 4 Skills Quarterly Update

All governors had received the Financial Health-check report. The Board acknowledged the strong performance of Alison Parkes and Jeff Mannering of First 4 Skills.

The report was noted.

13.155 Any Other Business

Mr Booth gave a verbal update on the activities of the newly formed Students' Union. The learner voice was being empowered by the introduction of an independent students' union. The student parliament was taking shape and it was anticipated there would be 30 members by the end of October; the Board's input and interaction would be welcomed. Mr Booth had met with Stephen Twigg MP to work on a bid to Virgin's entrepreneurial programme. Schools had also been approached. Governors discussed how to share and utilise the opinions of the Students' Union. It was felt to be important that students knew what good teaching and learning looked like so they could give meaningful critique which would be a valuable resource if managed well. As the Students' Union president was automatically a student

governor, the Students' Union would have direct access to the Board. In addition it was planned to circulate the minutes of Students' Union meetings to the Board. Governors thanked Mr Booth for his update.

Mr Booth informed the Board that he soon would be standing down as Students' Union president and student governor as he had secured a full-time position in his chosen career. The Board congratulated Mr Booth on his employment.

13.156 Confidentiality of Items

Item 10 – Budget Update

Item 15 – Staff Survey until results are communicated to staff.

Item 16 – F4S Quarterly Update – some commercially sensitive information

13.157 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on 15th October.

All staff and students with the exception of Ms Bowker, Mr McIntyre and Ms Lenderyou left the meeting at this point.

158-162 Confidential Minutes held by Clerk.

Meeting Closed at 7.15pm