

The City of Liverpool College

Minutes of the Board meeting held on
10th December 2014

Present:

Ms Louise Barry
Ms Elaine Bowker (Principal)
Ms Gemma Charters (Staff Governor)
Ms Clare Crowther
Ms Lydia Field
Ms Shireen Kincade
Ms Viv Lacey (Vice Chair)
Cllr Nick Small
Mr David Wilson

In Attendance:

Ms Angela Cox (Deputy Principal)
Mr David McIntyre (Vice Principal Finance
and Corporate Resources)
Mr Simon Pierce (Vice Principal Curriculum)

Ms Christine Lenderyou (Clerk to the Board)

Due to the unavoidable absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair agreed to Chair the meeting. The Senior Post Holders with the exception of the Principal were asked to leave the meeting while the Senior Post Holder Targets were discussed.

14.118 Confidential Minutes of Previous Meeting

The confidential minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true record.

14.119 Draft Senior Post Holder Targets 2014-15

Minute removed for confidentiality.

14.120 Recruitment of Vice Principal Business Development

There would be some slight changes to the job description but its focus would remain business development. *[Part of minute removed due to containing commercially sensitive information or information relating to third parties/individuals]* The Board approved the recruitment to the role of Vice Principal Partnerships & Business Development and approved the delegation of authority to the Principal to agree with the Chair arrangements for the recruitment process.

The Senior Post Holders re-joined the meeting along with Ms Charters and Ms Kincade. The new VPC was congratulated by the Board on his appointment and introductions were made.

14.121 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Charlotte Burns, Sue Carmichael, Brian Cronin, John Denny, Peter Grieve, John Nolan, Ian Pollitt and Peter Tavernor.

14.122 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of previous meeting were approved as a true record. The Principal confirmed that UCU's notice of intention to strike regarding pay had been received and this was thought to be national.

14.123 Actions from previous meeting.

Safeguarding:

A meeting had taken place with the city's Director of Children's Services and another meeting would take place with an expert in mental health. The Vice Chair stated the Board would take some assurance from this. It seemed to the Deputy Principal that as the College's students were largely post 16 but didn't fit adult criteria there was a gap.

All other actions on the report were noted.

14.124 Quality Improvement Plan and Single Equality Scheme

The Board approved the extension of the current Quality Improvement Plan and the current Single Equality Scheme until the next Board meeting to allow the Board to focus on the Self-Assessment Report and Financial Statements.

14.125 Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

The Performance and Quality Task and Finish Group (PQTFG) had met the previous week and gone through the SAR in detail. The Executive accepted the comments from the Group regarding celebrating success more but advised that there was a balance between doing this and maintaining credibility as it was essential to demonstrate an accurate understanding of the College's position. Where improvement could be clearly demonstrated by data it would be highlighted more, but improvements which were difficult to evidence or quantify would not be drawn out to the same extent. The Principal advised that the Group had agreed with the grades, using the evidence from the most recent Ofsted inspection to partially inform their opinion. The Deputy Principal outlined the process of how the SAR was submitted and who would have access to it.

[Part of minute removed due to containing commercially sensitive information or information relating to third parties/individuals]

The Deputy Principal said the changes to the SAR would be circulated electronically. The Board approved the SAR subject to those changes being made.

The Principal advised that the PQTFG had decided to track one area through the current year to see if it reflected its QIP in order to give assurance that the process worked. The Board agreed this would be a valuable exercise.

14.126 Financial Statements 2013-14

The Financial Statements had previously been received by the Audit Committee which had been satisfied that no significant changes were required before they were presented to the Board.

The VPFCR explained that the Financial Statements were accompanied by a letter of representation and the auditors' management letter. A summary of the figures involved was also provided. The difference between the cash based operating surplus and historical cost surplus was explained and the VPFCR said that it was the first time since 2010/11 such a historical cost surplus had been posted.

Dr Carey cautioned that there was still little room for error as the financial situation sector-wide was precarious. The Principal said this was reflected by BIS' decision to make emergency loans available to colleges. The full sector picture would emerge after colleges submitted their financial statements in December.

Ms Crowther acknowledged that the surplus was impressive but believed that schools may have felt the impact and asked whether schools were fully resourced to get to grade two. The VPFCR said pressure on resources would remain as funding continued to decrease but there was clarity on the situation. The Deputy Principal felt there had been more investment in frontline curriculum over the last few years but thinking differently was required, for example collaborating with employers and seeking sponsorship. *[Sentence removed due to containing commercially sensitive information or information relating to third parties/individuals]*. Ms Barry asked whether this would be part of the new VPPBD role and the Principal confirmed it would be. The Deputy Principal said there had been historical underinvestment. The Board acknowledged the restraints on resources and agreed that the College would need to become more innovative throughout the organisation. Dr Carey stated that while resources were important other elements such as quality teaching would be crucial to the College achieving grade 2 and lack of resources should not be used as a reason for not achieving this. The Deputy Principal felt the College had improved in this respect and had become more responsive with only a tiny minority of cases where resources was used as an excuse for poor performance. The Principal would consider how to capture innovative thinking for reporting to the Board. Mr Wilson referenced the

presentation from Ms Manning at the last meeting and said an element of replicating best practice was required.

The Audit Committee Annual Report was considered by the Board and approval was given for it to accompany the financial statements.

14.127 Strategic Plan

The Principal tabled an update regarding the work carried out by Kenyon Fraser and asked whether the Board felt the document reflected where the College should be. The rationale was explained as scale was felt to be important as were people, business, and location. Some additional values had been included. The Strategic Leadership Team had previewed the document and liked that the strategy spoke to people. Ms Kincade felt it would appeal to students and have the right components. Governors agreed that the use of “you” was important but queried whether education was still too much in the background visually. Governors asked how measurable the outer ring was and asked if there should be a word behind the inner ring like “ensuring quality”. It was suggested that “widest” may be more appropriate than “biggest” in the mission. In response to a question about the Ofsted requirement to teach British values the Deputy believed this was more directed at schools. The Principal commented that the College promoted the philosophy of equal importance and therefore developed a range of diverse values. The Board agreed that corporate speak should be avoided within the mission statement and the values.

The Board noted the update and the Principal undertook to feed back to Kenyon Fraser.

14.128 Performance Dashboard

The VPFCR explained the key areas on the performance dashboard. Maximum success rates for apprenticeships were discussed with the Board having previously been made aware of some difficulties. The VPFCR advised that the percentage of bank staff reported was based on head count numbers and a better reflection may be percentage of teaching time so this metric may be changed to a cost basis for future reports.

The Principal acknowledged that English and maths should be on the dashboard but the metrics would need to be decided. The Clerk reminded governors that this had been requested at the strategic planning event but this was the first dashboard to have been produced since then. The Deputy Principal advised that attendance and on-track students could also be reported on.

Complete appraisals were at 13% due to the time of year. Since the report was produced it had increased to over 50% and it was anticipated most objectives would be set before the Christmas break.

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14.129 Work Based Learning (WBL)

The WBL paper had gone to the PQTFG group and they had thought it was very frank which was endorsed by the Board. Ms Charters queried whether functional skills was being fully addressed. The Principal felt there had sometimes been an issue regarding assessors’ understanding and the teaching staff’s assumptions regarding proxy qualifications. She emphasised the importance of apprentices achieving all component parts of a framework and used Maritime to illustrate this point. The Deputy Principal also said there was now more visibility at Executive level. The Vice Chair appreciated the transparency and that there were clear actions in place to address issues. Governors asked if this was an area which would give a strong indication in May of where the College was; the Principal was emphatic that it would be a strong indicator due to its year round nature. Governors requested that WBL be monitored at Board level between now and May. The Principal said the PQTFG would also monitor. Governors asked for key headline measures and reporting by exception at Board. The Deputy Principal suggested that it could be added to the summary paper for the Post Inspection Action Plan. Governors agreed that this was a sensible approach.

14.130 Student Recruitment

The Principal explained that the shortfall in 16-18 student numbers in 2014-15 would see a reduction in funding for 2015-16. Anecdotally the principal believed it was a sector-wide issue. More students seemed to be staying at school. City 6 entry requirements had increased which had reduced student numbers; plumbing provision had also reduced. Discussion with other principals indicated the compulsory maths and English requirement seemed to be having an impact on retention. The Principal advised that the R06 funding agency return in early February would be used by the EFA to confirm the funding allocation for 2015-16. There was a decision to be made about the resources to invest in increasing student numbers. In January it would be mainly NEET students (Not in Education, Employment or Training) which was not necessarily driven by marketing. There would be some other courses starting in January but not necessarily 16-18. *[Part of minute removed due to containing commercially sensitive information or information relating to third parties/individuals].*

The Deputy Principal said the college would no longer rely on September starts for its numbers. Flexibility would be improved. Provision would need to be adapted in response to the audience.

In respect of loans there was some demand for January starts on Access courses even though there hadn't been much in the way of marketing. The Principal was fairly confident the forecast would be reached.

It seemed that there were £x of assurances against an income generation target of £x so there was more work to do.

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14.131 Finance Update

Many aspects had already been covered such as the risks around learner numbers and income targets. Month 3 management accounts had been published and were summarised in the update. The rolling forecast reflected those risks and some others such as overseas income. Expenditure was showing some savings for pay, premises and franchise costs but not enough to offset the reduction in income so the forecast was showing a deviation. The balance sheet was as expected. The cash position was slightly worse as a prudent approach had been taken. The figures didn't fully take account of active management of the position or the future donation from F4S of £x

There was not much movement on ratios, which were still comfortably within bank covenants for the group.

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14.132 Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP)

The Deputy Principal had prepared a summary sheet. The dashboard and PIAP showed different figures for attendance but this was because it changed daily on the system and the reports had been produced on different dates. There remained a challenge to get attendance to 90% but 87% would be felt to be a significant achievement. English and maths was a challenge at 10 percentage points lower than the rest of the college particularly for functional skills. 75% of lessons were felt to be effective practice. Staff at risk of not delivering effective practice would be targeted in terms of providing additional support for improvement. Governors queried whether

any attendance information by postcode was available to ascertain whether there were issues with transport. The Principal felt such analysis wasn't particularly useful as there were limited options to address it. Curriculum managers had taken into account that adult provision sometimes required a later start time to account for school runs. The Deputy Principal said that trends indicated students were actively choosing to attend lessons where the teaching and learning was better and engagement was a factor. Governors also queried whether moving some provision from Bankfield had impacted but the information available did not seem to suggest this.

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The Virtual Learning Environment for apprenticeships would be uploaded although the material already existed. Information for English and maths was very well populated.

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The Principal advised that destinations showed 93% of students going to HE or employment and agreed with the Board that this should be promoted. The student survey result was also much better than the equivalent last year with averages being above 90% in the context of a higher return rate.

Governors accepted that the Board papers generally focussed on areas of priority which needed to be addressed but commented that this could mean success stories were often overlooked and so it was requested that the Principal's report be reinstated. Governors also asked for media coverage to be copied to them to support their ambassadorial roles.

14.133 Appointment of Board Representatives at First 4 Skills And Liverpool Business Services Annual General Meetings

Mr Wilson was appointed as the Board's representative at the First 4 Skills AGM and Councillor Small was appointed as the Board's representative to attend the Liverpool Business Services AGM.

Meeting closed at 7.07pm.