

## **The City of Liverpool College**

### **Meeting of the Corporation Board**

**Held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017 at 3.00pm**

Present: Dr Peter Tavernor, (Chair), Viv Lacey (Vice Chair), Louise Barry, Elaine Bowker (Principal), Martin Carey, Tony Cobain, Lydia Field, Patrick Hurley, Benjamin McGowan (Student), John Nolan (Staff), Abdi Saed (Student), Gill Williams (Staff)

In attendance: Julie Barnes (Deputy Chief Executive), Mike Firth (Observer – SFA), Damien Kilkenny (DoL), Nicola Kumar (Strategic Development Manager), Christine Lenderyou (Clerk), Ann Monk (Group FD).

#### **17.5 Welcome and apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A strategic planning and training event for governors had taken place earlier in the day and governors were thanked for the time they had given. On behalf of governors, the Chair also recorded thanks for the time taken by managers to show governors the new laboratories and dedicated STEM centre which had been partly funded by a capital bid agreed by the Combined Authority and represented a significant investment in the learning environment.

Owing to the change in the board business cycle as a result of extraordinary meetings held in January, there were a number of apologies. Apologies had been received from: Clare Crowther, John Denny, Hilene Henry, Lawrence Kenwright, Steve Sankson, Ian Pollitt and Phil Sheard.

The VPC had sent apologies for his absence. Mr Kilkenny (DoL) had been asked to join the meeting in order to present the student performance items.

#### **17.6 Minutes, actions and matters arising**

The minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016 Board meeting were approved as a true record. Actions were noted as complete.

##### City 6

While reviewing the minutes, the Chair suggested that the verbal update from PQTFG could be taken at the same time as there was an element of crossover. City 6 had been discussed at the Board meeting and this had been followed up by the PQTFG on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017 as the main item of business. Dr Katie Spall had attended and was able to demonstrate some good practice in the area, and had confirmed that managers had been empowered to manage with objective criteria for intervention with staff which was measured and proper. As the Board were aware, there remained some areas of challenge, but the PQTFG had been assured that appropriate action was being taken and this was evidence-based. [Confidential – held separately by the Clerk].

The Board were pleased to note the detailed scrutiny of City 6 by the PQTFG and that the constructive challenge being applied to all pillars was clearly apparent, but were clear on the need for a line of sight to remain from all pillars through to Board level. There were still challenges to overcome and improvements to be made. The gradings within the SAR would be

revisited in the light of more recently available information and the College's latest performance, although the Principal reminded governors that this was a retrospective document. The Principal stated that the management team were confident that they were taking appropriate action to build on the improvements made to date and to address remaining areas of challenge.

The Chair added that as was the case at every PQTFG, English and maths had formed part of the discussion around performance and quality within the pillars. The Principal had alluded earlier in the day to the challenges in recruiting good mathematicians and further consideration was being given to how to continue to attract and retain quality staff. Good practice had been identified in English where there were a lot of new teachers and feedback had greatly improved. A new in year measure had been introduced which showed the proportion of students working at or above their target grade, however maths did not perform as well against this measure at 30% although this was an improvement. The overall indicator was currently at 65%. Governors were assured that there was a targeted approach to intervention around students at risk of not achieving their target grade, and this figure should increase as the year went on and the impact of these interventions was felt.

#### Financial Statements

There had been considerable discussion at the previous Board meeting regarding the implications of not submitting the financial statements in advance of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016, due to issues stemming from the College being placed in Administered College Status. The senior team had ensured that every measure was taken in order to support the external auditors in meeting the SFA deadline and the Principal was pleased to confirm that the financial statements had been submitted on time, with an unqualified opinion.

#### **17.7 Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)**

The Director of Learning (DoL) was welcomed to the meeting.

The DoL drew the Board's attentions to the recommendations in the summary paper regarding formal approval of the new format PIAP and QIP, highlighting in particular the new risk rating section which had been agreed and found to be helpful at SLT level and for the cross-college Quality team. The new format had been reviewed by the senior HMI who was leading Ofsted's Support and Challenge arrangement with the College and positive feedback had been received. The risk rating provided an at-a-glance view of what actions would have the biggest impact; in answer to a question, the DoL agreed it was similar to an impact rating.

The document was split into six main sections with HE now included. The sections allowed visibility of responsibilities for individual curriculum managers and the RAG rating enabled close scrutiny of those areas which needed to be driven more. Governors were advised that whereas previous targets had focused on getting to national rates, as the College was now performing above national rates the targets had been adjusted and the aim was now to get to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. Governors questioned whether this had been made clear to the senior HMI and the DoL confirmed that it had.

Governors questioned the DoL on the visibility of the document and how it was used to drive performance. The DoL advised that it was reviewed by each department and completed by

the strategic lead before being reviewed by the VP Curriculum and then taken at SLT for discussion as well as being received and scrutinised at each meeting of PQTFG and Board. It was completed monthly with information collected centrally. In addition to the scrutiny and debate by SLT it impacted on quality plans at Head of School level. Where the SLT identified risks, further actions would be discussed and agreed to drive improvements. Ms Williams confirmed that in her capacity as Head of School, it was used extensively as a dynamic document.

The Board reviewed the specific targets, acknowledging that they were aspirational targets which reflected the College's ambition to be among the very best in the country, for example English basic skills was already at 75% but the target was 80%. Similarly, an ALPS score of 4 in City 6 was impressive and underlined the commitment to achieving more than "satisfactory". Governors who had attended PQTFG were able to confirm that Dr Spall had been describing actions taken to challenge not only areas of difficulty but also areas that could improve still further.

Governors noted the updated performance and targets overview which included a performance against targets calculation as well as 2015/16 performance against 2014/15 outcomes but highlighted that they would find it helpful to include a direction of travel measure too which would show movement from the previous month's PIAP and enable meaningful and robust challenge. Subject to the amends requested, the Board formally endorsed the revised PIAP and QIP.

Key performance points were noted such as:

- The Higher Education internal survey returned a 96% overall satisfaction, a 2% increase from 15/16 and significantly above both the National Rate (NR) of 89%, and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile College target of 94%.
- Apprenticeship employer satisfaction has increased to 65% since September (50%) but remains a key focus of the work based learning team and local management (end of year target 90%).
- Study programme and adult retention was just above term 2 target of 96% (96.3% and 96.1% respectively). Whole College and local interventions were in place to ensure at risk learners are supported, retained and achieve their programmes, but the SLT were treating this as a risk which required close attention and intervention.
- HE retention was currently 98.8% which was significantly above the end of year target of 92%.
- Maximum timely Achievement Rate (AR) for Apprenticeships was currently 76% with a target timely AR of 72% (NR 58.9%).
- 85% of Work Based Learning (WBL) observations were effective within the classroom, but portfolio reviews were a concern. Focused CPD was delivered to all WBL staff in January, and

a Curriculum Review was planned in February to measure the impact of this on the quality of the portfolio completion.

- Currently 88% of AS, 85% A2 and 86.7% of level 3 vocational students were on target to achieve their target grade, which would result in a good value added score.
- Attendance was currently 85.3% with English & Maths depressing this figure at 73.0% (College target 90%). The VP Curriculum continued to work with teaching staff and managers to implement actions identified on the QIP. This had increased 7-day attendance by 1.2% in the past fortnight.
- Currently 66% of English & Maths lessons observed were considered to be effective. Priority has been to assess sessions with poorer outcomes in 2014/15. Peer Observation and Teaching Squares are ongoing as well as pairing stronger teachers with those in need of development.
- A new 'Predicted Final Grade' measure was in place for all qualifications. Currently, this indicated that 64.4% of English GCSE students were predicted to achieve their target grade, and 29.8% of maths GCSE students. The quality team were testing the reliability of the data with some schools and ensuring that improvement actions were in place for all learners. The college target for grade improvement was a minimum of 50%.
- Effective observations were currently 78%, an increase from 69.8% at the end of the first half term. Areas considered to be the highest risk in terms of delivering a good student experience have been targeted.
- 73% of external examiner reports identified good practice with the remaining 27% of reports identifying low risk actions. No external examiner reports have identified significant/immediate actions.
- 99.9% of students remained enrolled onto all elements of their study programme, greatly reducing the risk of any financial claw-back.

Governors challenged on the difference between overall attendance across the College and attendance at English and maths. It was difficult to obtain national figures, although the Executive were aware that colleges struggled with English and maths nationally and this was posing key challenges. The DoL advised that the AoC had attempted to benchmark information by region but had struggled to get colleges to provide the information, which was widely taken to be reflective of the issues colleges faced in encouraging attendance at English and maths. The Principal added that she had raised this with the senior HMI assigned to the College in the interests of accessing national benchmarking information but this had not been fruitful. The DoL confirmed that this remained a key focus and managers were keenly aware of the need to hold English and maths staff and students to the same standards as other areas of the College.

Governors were able to take assurance that there was appropriate focus on those students who were predicted higher grades and actions taken if they looked at risk of not achieving

their predicted grade (even if they looked like they would still achieve a B or C), rather than the focus being solely on getting as many students as possible to C and above. The DoL stressed that this was crucial if the College wanted to reach the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile and that it was essential to be able to show value added and this ensured that students were reaching their full potential. The Principal reiterated the importance of value added, referencing a discussion from earlier in the day as to the changing measures around grade improvement in respect of English and maths. It was agreed that it would be helpful to have a more in-depth focus on this at a future Board meeting. **Action: VPC**

The DoL advised that this was under continual discussion at SLT and that each of the pillars was looking at this in detail. Achievement and retention had both moved in the right direction but all understood that value added was a critical measure. Teaching and learning was key. Every student had an aspirational target grade and teachers were tasked with providing the stretch and challenge to ensure they achieved this. Heads of Schools were asked to carry out observations and support would be put into place via Advanced Lecturers or the Teaching and Learning Managers. Equality and Diversity issues may be highlighted.

In response to a question, the DoL stated he would expect to see a clear impact on KPIs with week on week improvement. When asked how failure to improve would be dealt with, the DoL explained that if concerted action to improve was being taken then the person would be given up to six weeks to demonstrate improvement, but if the failure to improve was as a result of not engaging with the support provided then this would be dealt with more quickly. The Board were assured that there were very few members of staff who were not committed to improvement but the process now enabled quicker challenge from managers and movement into capability. The Board welcomed the sharper approach and acknowledged the increased clarity.

The DoL was challenged as to whether ProMonitor was being used properly and consistently. He confirmed that monthly monitoring suggested compliance was now at 95% with a small amount of non-compliance being due to the way individual qualifications were structured. Remaining non-compliance was being addressed through management actions and with support from HR. Governors queried whether ProMonitor included attendance, with the DoL advising that it included all key data for learners and enabled intervention from a central viewpoint as well as locally: the DoL could deploy Achievement Coaches to those areas where there needed to be an intensive focus and additional support for attendance or retention issues, for example. The Board agreed it would be useful to receive a demonstration of ProMonitor at a future Board meeting. In response to a question it was confirmed that safeguarding was also flagged in ProMonitor but wasn't visible to all staff. **Action: CL**

## **17.8 Performance Dashboard**

The Board reviewed the new format which had been adapted to reflect previous feedback. The direction of travel would be incorporated into the next iteration of the dashboard as per the discussion around the PIAP. **Action: JB**

Key points raised were:

### Attendance

The first page focussed on attendance for each school and was RAG rated although it didn't reflect prior year figures; the College was aiming to move to good/outstanding and, as with the PIAP, the RAG rating was relating to performance against the target.

The Board reviewed specific areas [Confidential – held separately by the Clerk]. The Board also reviewed Hospitality and Catering and were advised that initiatives such as attendance cards were used as well as one to ones and meetings with parents. One factor was when students took on part time work which was common in areas such as Catering, but the Board agreed that 90% remained the target, although it was acknowledged this was aspirational and it was difficult to measure against other colleges as there was no agreed criteria. One governor noted the good use of MI data within the College and the Principal confirmed that key improvements in data and reporting had been made some time ago as previously discussed with the Board.

Other key points raised were:

#### Retention

- 16-18 (partnerships) – retention in this area had dropped but it was clarified that some of this related to a movement to two year programmes rather than additional learners being lost.
- Business and Professional – 8 students lost from small cohort of 16-18 – this school no longer existed but again this was a holdover from multiple-year programmes and a legacy issue with a small number of students being finished in year. The small volumes involved meant that the impact on retention seemed disproportionately large.
- 19+ retention – Hair and Beauty retention was at 94% against a target of 93% but was rated red as higher retention was expected at this point in the year
- City 6 retention had dropped in the last two weeks and although it remained above target, this was flagged as the area was receiving intense focus from the Board and senior management.
- Access was below target but still 3% above the previous year and above national rates. Governors noted this and reiterated their strategic direction and commitment to continuous improvement which applied to all areas, including those at or above national rates.

#### Observations

Context was provided [Confidential – held separately by the Clerk].

#### Utilisation

Currently at 95.8% but was closer to 97% if adjusted for fractional staff. Ms Williams agreed that utilisation was subject to scrutiny and was on the agenda for weekly Head of School meetings. The Chair of the Group Finance Committee added that the Committee had asked for more detail on cost drivers and utilisation would likely be covered there. In response to a question it was confirmed that average class size approached 16 but there were issues in some areas with being able to physically accommodate more students, largely due to specialist facilities or previous space norms. The Principal noted that this had been a consideration in recent capital projects and the future Digital Academy.

#### Sickness

Sickness absence was now the lowest it had ever been. The Board attributed this to the introduction of the Bradford factor and the changes to the long-term absence procedure. Absence for teaching staff was now below that of the support staff. The HR Director produced a monthly report which required the manager of the worst performing area to respond. The Board agreed that sickness absence was moving in the right direction and noted that it was improving month on month.

#### Appraisals

It was clarified that 84% of appraisals had been completed. Governors challenged what the deadline for completion was and how the senior team knew for certain that appraisals were being completed. The DoL explained that appraisals were uploaded to a central system which enabled reporting. Appraisals had also been moderated for consistency and checked against KPIs; Ms Williams verified this as a staff governor. Governors were pleased to hear that this activity took place but cautioned that this needed to be underpinned by robust performance management.

The Board were informed that reporting on financial drivers would be incorporated into the management accounts going forward, which was also in line with feedback from the FE Commissioner's recent visit. Governors welcomed this commitment to further improving the clarity of reporting.

17.9

#### **Narrowing the Gap**

The Board had received the detailed report and this correlated with the action plan provided. The report also included key areas for improvement, and the DoL would be incorporating this into the next iteration of the PIAP/QIP to monitor progress against the actions throughout the year.

**Action: DK**

Governors' attention was drawn to:

#### Classroom-based Provision

- The achievement of learners with a disability was broadly in line with learners with no known disability, but the achievement of learners with a physical disability was 10.9% below learners with no known disability
- The achievement of learners with a declared learning difficulty was 5.6% below learners without a declared learning difficulty, with a significant difference on level 1 programmes (9.3%)
- The proportion of BAME learners studying level 3 programmes was 17.2% below the total proportion of BAME learners within the college
- Female achievement on level 3 programmes was 5% below male achievement

#### Apprenticeship Provision

- The timely achievement of learners with a declared learning difficulty was 12.3% below learners without a declared learning difficulty
- The proportion of learners with a declared disability studying apprenticeship provision (2.8%) was significantly below the proportion of learners with a declared learning difficulty studying classroom (8.5%) and higher education (7.0%)
- Only 5% of learners studying on all apprenticeship provision are BAME, with

1.5% of learners studying level 3 apprenticeships BAME

- Overall male timely achievement was 7.6% above female timely achievement

#### Higher Education

- The achievement of learners with a declared learning difficulty was 10% below that of learners without a declared learning difficulty
- The proportion of BAME learners achieving was 5% below non-BAME learners

Governors appreciated the format of the plan which provided clarity on the action being taken and enabled the Board to take assurance that there was visibility on key issues with appropriate measures in place. The DoL pointed to learner focus groups as being important in establishing whether there were intrinsic issues and highlighted that staff were encouraging participation, with initiatives including clubs to support integration, etc. The Principal stressed the need to ensure that minority groups of students were also held to the same expectations and aspirations e.g. female students in a male-dominated class should still be expected to participate and contribute as they would be expected to compete against male students for jobs in the world beyond the College.

Updates against the key actions outlined would come to future meetings of the Board via the PIAP/QIP as previously discussed.

### **17.10 Finance Update**

The management accounts had been reviewed by the Group Finance Committee. The Group FD emphasised that it was important for the Board to note the Year to Date (YTD) position and how this would impact on the outturn so she had included a brief summary and also shown the impact of the minority shareholder interest in F4S.

[Confidential – held separately by the Clerk]

The Group FD explained that the realignment of costs between SharEd, F4S and the College had greatly improved visibility but meant that it was difficult to make a prior year comparison; trend analysis would be more meaningful the following year with a clear baseline and reporting information. Cash remained tight although creditor position was slightly better than anticipated owing to the prudent approach taken to cash flow forecasting.

The reforecasting exercise had been extensive and the Group FD acknowledged the input from across the SLT. The main variances were highlighted. [Confidential – held separately by the Clerk]. The Board were advised that as a result of a change in policy, the SFA had funded over-delivery by the College relating to 2015/16 so an additional £321K had been received. The College was not planning to over deliver in 2016/17 as funding for over-delivery was not guaranteed.

HE income was slightly above budget.

The reforecast for apprenticeships was based on what was already in the system and an informed estimate of future starts. [Confidential – held separately by the Clerk]. Apprenticeship take up seemed to be slowing down while employers anticipated the introduction of the levy. As mentioned in discussions during the strategic planning event

earlier in the day, apprenticeships continued to demand a lot of resource from the College. The Board noted that apprenticeship income had been continually highlighted as a risk and that mitigations were in place.

19+ learner loans were in line with the budget which indicated that the forensic assumptions used had been appropriate.

Staff costs were under control, and teaching costs were favourable. Governors were directed to the graphs within the report which had been included at the request of the Group Finance Committee.

Administration costs had increased, as per the explanation in the paper, while franchise costs were slightly lower. There was also a variance in the SharEd recharge in part as a result of the TUPE exercise which had taken place and also the assignment of costs as discussed on previous occasions.

[Confidential – held separately by the Clerk]

#### **17.11 Financial Recovery Plan**

The Financial Recovery Plan was monitored against the budget and the management accounts confirmed the impact with action within the plan largely progressing well and reported on previously to the Board. The DCEx and Principal drew governors' attention to the sale of Vauxhall Road carpark. [Confidential – held separately by the Clerk]

The Group FD took the opportunity to highlight that even after the reforecast, the cash based operating surplus would be 4.8% which was well within the guideline of 3-5%. The bottom line would be around 1.1-1.5% so this was not as positive, but was an improvement on the previous year, and represented a good performance against the sector in the previous year when the bottom line was 0% according to the published finance record, and a deficit declared across the largest ten colleges. In response to a query, the DCEx advised that the latest finance record would become available in March/April.

The Principal advised that the cash based operating surplus figure was used to calculate the College's financial health grade which would be at least satisfactory but needed to continue to improve. The DCEx felt that the improvement in financial health and the positive movement against the cash based operating surplus and the bottom line was likely to reflect well against the rest of the sector but also accepted the need for continuous improvement.

#### **17.12 Update from Group Finance Committee**

Most items had been covered but the Chair wanted to draw attention to the scrutiny from the Group Finance Committee regarding [Confidential – held separately by the Clerk].

The reforecast had also been discussed in detail. Clarity had been obtained regarding apprenticeship starts and the Committee were able to understand the sensitivities around targets. The Chair emphasised that the reforecast didn't mean the original budget had been "wrong" but the reforecast was reflective of new and up to date information received throughout the year. The Chair summarised that it had been a productive meeting with plenty of challenge from the Committee and suitable assurance provided.

**17.13 Anti-Slavery Statement**

The Board had been able to review the statement in advance, which was based on AoC guidance. The College was required to make such a statement due to the size of its turnover. The Clerk highlighted that other policies may need an additional paragraph inserting to reflect the Anti-Slavery Statement (as well as the Single Equality Scheme) and the Board agreed that it was not necessary for the full policies to return to Board in these instances.

The Board formally approved the Anti-Slavery Statement.

**17.14 Single Equality Scheme**

The Board had reviewed the Single Equality Scheme in advance and appreciated it provided a strategic view across the College. The action plan which accompanied the document was also noted.

**17.15 Any Other Business**

1. The Clerk provided details of upcoming training from the AOC for governors on data and finance and asked governors to indicate if they would be attending.

**Action: Govs**

2. [Confidential – held separately by the Clerk]
3. [Confidential – held separately by the Clerk]
4. The Board wished to formally record thanks to Peter Grieve for his time as Chair and the time he dedicated to the College, both in his role as Chair and in a personal capacity.

*The Chair thanked everyone for attending and brought the meeting to a close.*