

The City of Liverpool College

Minutes of the Board meeting held on
27th January 2015

Present:

Ms Louise Barry
Ms Elaine Bowker (Principal)
Ms Charlotte Burns (Student Governor)
Dr Martin Carey
Ms Sue Carmichael
Ms Clare Crowther
Ms Lydia Field
Mr Peter Grieve (Chair)
Ms Viv Lacey (Vice Chair)
Mr John Nolan (Staff Governor)

In Attendance:

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

Ms Sue Price (CEO of First 4 Skills) – for
part of meeting

Ms Christine Lenderyou (Clerk to the Board)

15.1 Confidential Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

The Deputy and Vice Principals joined the meeting at this point, along with Sue Price (F4S CEO) John Nolan (staff governor) and Charlotte Burns (student governor).

15.2 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Gemma Charters, Ian Pollitt, Nick Small, Peter Tavernor and David Wilson.

15.3 Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

15.4 Actions from previous meeting.

The January mock exam period had taken place. An analysis would be available at the strategic planning event.

The final Self-Assessment Report (SAR) had been circulated to the Board and it was agreed it had been prudent to take a cautious approach.

Work Based Learning was on the agenda and had been incorporated into the Post Inspection Action Plan.

The report was noted.

15.5 Any Other Business

The Chair placed one item of other business regarding Board membership to be taken at the end of the meeting.

15.6 First 4 Skills Quarterly Report

[Part of minute removed for reasons of confidentiality either relating to commercial sensitivity or a third party/individual]

The CEO was thanked for her presentation and left the meeting at this point.

15.7 Performance Dashboard

The VPFCR explained that he had incorporated suggestions from the last meeting regarding English and maths and staffing.

The number of completed appraisals had increased but remained below target. Governors questioned this and were informed that a number of appraisals had been carried out which hadn't yet been added to the system although this was being addressed.

Governors agreed that the performance dashboard was clear and well-presented with key issues highlighted. It was an accurate reflection of previous discussions and items would be discussed in detail under other agenda items.

15.8 **Post Inspection Action Plan and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)**

The Quality Improvement Plan had been incorporated into the PIAP so was not a separate document. The rows in grey were the additional actions added as a result of the QIP.

Governors discussed the key points in detail which included:

General

- Overall, retention was positive but this time of year always brought caution.
- Retention was up on the same point for the last academic year although a more considered opinion could be taken after the February half term.
- Anecdotally, managers were seeing higher retention on the ground than last year.
- Students on-track for this time of year.
- Embedding of English and maths into vocational lessons was an emerging strength in most areas.
- [Part of minute removed for reasons of confidentiality either relating to commercial sensitivity or a third party/individual]
- There had been some progress on discrete English and maths but there was further work to do. The newly appointed Head of English and Maths would start the following week. Training had been planned for staff.

City 6

- Better retention and attendance than previous year.
- There was less volume in terms of discrete English and maths lessons.
- Numbers of students on-track to achieve qualification were good.
- There was some concern about GCSE students within the pillar and this might need coming back to but this was a significantly smaller cohort than A level students.
- There was some risk around the accuracy of marking; assurance was in place to address this through targets use of external markers as agreed earlier in the year.
- Consideration was being given to whether the planned "Mocksted" should be targeted based on feedback from mock exams although it was not possible to say yet whether this would be the case.

Work Based Learning

- 79-81% of apprentices were on-track.
- Timely achievement had been focussed on, with the 90 day deadline being key. Paul Nightingale (Quality) had been working on this. As monitoring improved this should be less problematic.

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In reference to the full PIAP and QIP document the Vice Chair asked what the main area of concern was. The Deputy Principal said English and maths was a significant risk and the Chair

agreed engagement was an issue. Governors asked how English and maths compared to other colleges. The Deputy Principal said she thought it was a common issue across the sector. The VPC said there were some issues with student buy in and staff buy in but it was a requirement so it would need to be done. Embedding and GCSEs were progressing but functional skills was weaker although actions were being taken. Extra classes were being run. Technical and Enterprise were running sessions and then embedding streamed English and maths classes. Parents were also being engaged. The Deputy Principal said that delivering English and maths at a higher level meant that success rates seemed to have reduced but it was aspirational for students. The Principal said scale was an issue. Possibly only three other colleges nationally were delivering English and maths on the same scale. The compulsory aspect was an issue. Funding was at risk for an entire student's programme if they didn't achieve English and maths. Governors questioned if there was anything the College could learn from on a national basis but accepted it was new territory for the sector although emphasised that it was fundamental to get right to ensure students had more options in the future.

The Chair also challenged whether the trigger times for work based learning were quick enough as most employers would want to know that day if someone hasn't turned up. The Deputy Principal agreed and said this did happen in the majority of places but not systematically. This was an action for the Head of Work Based Learning.

Ms Burns felt there was some connection to the quality of teaching and staff absence and gave examples. The Principal said there were correlations and this would be discussed under another agenda item.

The Board noted the report and approved the QIP and its incorporation into the PIAP, as they had confidence it was appropriately structured and focussed.

15.9 Performance and Quality Task and Finish Group

The Principal gave a verbal update as Dr Tavernor had sent his apologies. The meeting had focussed on the SAR and the matters covered in the minutes of the previous meeting. Then the group had looked at City 6 and its action plan. Dr Katie Spall had attended and governors took assurance from what she had said and the data provided. Teaching, learning and assessment were addressed and the "Aspire" programme to stretch and challenge students had been introduced. The indications appeared to show City 6 was moving in the right direction, but more assurance would be taken from the mock exam results.

Peter Walsh had also attended as PQTFG wanted to assure Board of quality processes so decided to track the QIP from Engineering and Logistics throughout the year. Mr Walsh had given governors a good awareness of what went on in his school. Student satisfaction was good, but there was an issue around historic under investment. The Principal had taken part in focus groups there the previous day and picked up on similar feedback from students although there had also been a lot of praise for teachers. The impact was examined. It was early days in the process but the group were able to take some assurances. The Principal highlighted that Peter Walsh had been in College for 30 years without taking a single day of sick leave. He was a longstanding member of staff who told the group he felt assured by current management. Governors could take assurance that the information given to the group by managers matched that which was presented at Board.

Moving forwards, the Chair of PQTFG was keen to see triangulation between finance, performance and quality. The Chair agreed that this was important.

15.10 Finance

The month 4 management accounts had been circulated in advance. Month 5 would be circulated after the meeting. The Notice of Concern should be lifted as all of the conditions had been met.

The VPFCR gave a comprehensive presentation with the following points highlighted:

- The VPFCR had spoken to the bank over Christmas about the financial position as it was behind budget and it was important that the bank did not think that the College was unaware of the position or oblivious to the risks. The VPFCR had gone through the management accounts with the bank line by line and this seemed to have given the bank some confidence.
- Month 4 accounts showed an £800k negative variance on cash based operating surplus for the year to date. Key variances related to apprenticeship income, 24+ loans and staff costs although the staff costs should diminish.
- There would be a £500K shortfall at the end of the year which would mean a £2.3m surplus rather than £2.8m.
- Significant movements over £0.25m were detailed, although there were very few.

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Governors appreciated the detailed but concise presentation but sought assurance in a number of areas:

- Ratios - performance ratio was highlighted as being the most challenging but as this was directly linked to the forecast cash based operating surplus it was unsurprising.
- Risks from decreased student numbers - The Principal said this had been reflected as a financial risk. The risk register did address it, but maybe not entirely.
- Reduced funding - A £4m reduction in income next year was anticipated with at least 15% reduction in adult funding. Therefore the College was trying to increase apprentice and loan student numbers. Income generation had been accelerated and was showing some success and may be a bit more aspirational in future but governors were reminded it was from a low base. Governors questioned whether the Business Diversification group should be re-established to review progress. Dr Carey would be willing to Chair again if the Executive team and rest of the Board thought it would add value.
- Good will was in relation to balance sheet - The VPFCR said it was an intangible asset generated with the acquisition of F4S, being the difference between the purchase price and opening value.
- The general election in May 2015 and whether planning was taking place regarding possible impacts - The Principal said immediate changes were not anticipated although the funding agencies were still to confirm funding rates. Planning for the future would be part of the upcoming strategic planning day.

15.11 **Single Equality Scheme**

The VPC presented the Single Equality Scheme (SES). The existing SES was fit for purpose so only small changes were required. The core of information relating to students and staff had been removed as there was a requirement to publish annually. The College had been nominated for a diversity award. Alongside the SES was a refreshed action plan for the year. It had been a success last year with 7 key objectives achieved at high level.

Governors questioned whether there was any consultation with student and staff groups. The VPC confirmed it went to the College Equality Group but would go out to staff and students more systematically.

Governors sought and received assurance on whether the SES had been cross referenced against emerging strategy particularly around equality of beliefs being balanced with not being offensive towards others with different beliefs.

Dr Carey asked to see the diversity profile. The Clerk would circulate.

Governors believed that the SES appropriately reflected the College's values as well as complying with the relevant legislation and as a result approved the Single Equality Scheme.

15.12 **Narrowing the Gap**

The VPC presented the report and advised that the headlines were underpinned by the numerical information in the appendices. Targets were not set for specific groups as the intention was to ensure there were no gaps. When data was looked at by ethnicity/disability etc ideally any gaps would be narrowing. The key points discussed were:

- Ofsted had not noted any significant gaps.
- There were no gaps for students with disabilities and there were no gaps for BME students.
- 16-18 year old students with learning difficulties were not disadvantaged.
- The gap for postcode disadvantage had narrowed to half a percent.
- Students in receipt of learning support out performed students at all levels which showed that the support in place worked.
- At the top levels there was not much of a gender gap but 19+ females outperformed male students although this may be to do with GCSE programmes.
- A lot of male students seem to have withdrawn around Christmas which may be connected to economic circumstances although it didn't seem to be repeating this year.
- For younger students, male students outperformed female students.
- 16-18 students from non-disadvantaged backgrounds outperformed students from disadvantaged backgrounds at all levels. The gap in success rates was slightly increased on 2012/13 although at 2.7% it was still below the 5.3% gap of two years ago suggesting that the introduction of a range of support measures has had a sustained impact.
- Support was working but there was more to do.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students based on postcode had dropped.
- In response to a query governors were advised that a factor was applied for funding for support

Louise Barry left the meeting at this point.

The Deputy Principal said the focus was on attracting students who wanted to learn and progress rather than their postcode. The Chair emphasised that working out how to narrow those gaps was important. The VPC said every HoS had their own QIP which addressed gaps in their areas.

Governors agreed the reporting could be considered a case of good practice and queried whether it was better than at other colleges. The Deputy Principal said that it was a framework she had brought to the College and the VPC had adapted.

15.13 Staff Absence

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The Chair asked what the solutions were. The VPFCR said long term sickness was being managed and Occupational Health was being used accordingly. Short term absence was problematic and the introduction of the Bradford Factor would help. Where intervention did take place, absence reduced. Staff with particular issues may receive particular support. [Part of minute removed for reasons of confidentiality either relating to commercial sensitivity or a third party/individual]

15.14 Principal's Report

The Principal referred to the most recent letter from Ofsted. Some brilliant teaching and learning had been observed but this wasn't consistent. There were a lot of positives as they were focussing on the weakest areas. Ofsted were doing less graded observations and now tended to do walkthroughs. [Part of minute removed for reasons of confidentiality either relating to commercial sensitivity or a third party/individual]

The marketing contract for the summer recruitment campaign had gone out to tender and was awarded to Kenyon Fraser. In the region of [Part of minute removed for reasons of confidentiality either relating to commercial sensitivity or a third party/individual] would be spent overall on PR, marketing and publicity. Governors commented that governors were invited to the pitches at short notice. The Principal accepted this and said it was the first time such a process had taken place.

Investors in People had been positive and it was noted that few organisations had the gold award.

The CEO of F4S and the Principal had both been nominated for Women in Business Awards. Question Time at the College would be led by students with Liverpool MPs and councillors attending and taking part in the panel. Governors were welcome to attend. The manifesto would be distributed on the way out. The College would host a Downtown in Business breakfast on 4th February at 8am. The North West Women in Business event had been a success.

The College would continue to try and forge strategic partnerships. It was imperative to keep abreast of the devolution agenda and consider how to position the College. Each pillar would ideally be linked with two really high value businesses.

The Principal referenced meeting with the Clinical Commission Group's Dr Simon Bowers around mental health. A specialist would be provided to the College and would also work on a longer term prevent agenda.

Governors noted that as performance continued to improve, the College was able to become much more externally focussed so it could grow and improve further. The Chair said the relationships with Hope should be promoted and the high number of College students who gained scholarships was very positive. The Principal said that Hope was one of the toughest universities to get into which outlined how impressive the strong relationships were.

15.15 Any Other Business

As Ms Field would be taking maternity leave from April, Ms Carmichael was happy to extend her second term from June 2015 to cApril 2016 to provide cover. The Board believed this was a sensible approach given Ms Carmichael's commitment and knowledge and approved the extension to her term.