



Minutes of the Board meeting
held on 2nd July 2013 at 4.30pm

Present:

Ms Louise Barry
Ms Sue Carmichael
Mr Tony Cobain
Ms Clare Crowther
Mr John Denny
Ms Claire Dove
Mr Peter Grieve
Ms Vivienne Lacey
Professor Gerald Pillay
Mr Ian Pollitt
Ms Vivienne Tyler (Chair)
Mr David Wilson

External Governors

Ms Elaine Bowker

Principal

Ms Martha Harris
Mr John Nolan

Staff Governor – Teaching
Staff Governor - Support

Mr Aaron Booth
Mr Daniel Hayes

Student Governor
Student Governor

In Attendance:

Ms Gill Banks
Mr David Brennan
Ms Angela Cox
Mr David McIntyre

Vice Principal Curriculum
Vice Principal Partnerships & Business Development
Deputy Principal
Vice Principal Finance & Corporate Resources

Ms Christine Lenderyou

Clerk to the Board

Items 1 and 2 were taken as confidential items and the corresponding minutes (13.104 and 13.105) are held by the Clerk. Mr Booth, Ms Harris, Mr Hayes and Mr Nolan joined the meeting after those items.

13.106 Appointment of Clerk

Ms Lenderyou left the meeting for the duration of this item. The Chair acted as Clerk in her absence.

Ms Lenderyou re-joined the meeting and was informed of the Board's decision to appoint her as Clerk to the Board.

13.107 Apologies

Mr Lazenbury and Councillor Small sent apologies.

13.108 Declarations of Interest

Ms Lenderyou declared an interest in item 6 – Appointment of Clerk - and had been required to leave the meeting for the duration of the item.

The Principal, Mr McIntyre and Mr Brennan declared interests as Board members of First 4 Skills (items 14.1 and 14.2).

Ms Lacey declared an interest in item 14 – Appointments to Committees.

13.109 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held 21st May 2013 were agreed as a true record. The Board noted an amendment to the information provided during that meeting (minute 13.95) regarding the variation in final FE funding allocations.

13.110 Outcome of Actions from Previous Meeting

13.7 Corporate Structure and Risk/Assurance Considerations

The Principal stated that the update was not contained in her report as the status indicated, but would instead form part of the programme for the next strategic planning event as it needed to be discussed in more detail by the Board, following feedback from the SFA.

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

13.111 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 there was an additional red rated item that had not been included in the summary report; A5.5 “*APs will work with SLT to target improvements to the availability of ILT in all areas*” was red rated as the College budget had not yet been set.

Governors felt assured by the level of progress made so far against the plan. The Deputy Principal highlighted the efforts that had been made by all staff to move the College forward as well as the in depth planning for the next academic year. Some items were rated red as it had been established it would be more practical to complete them at a later date; the Executive had no concerns regarding the feasibility of their completion. Governors requested that revised completion dates also be included in the next report. **Act: AC**

The Board were in agreement that the PIAP was progressing well and was appropriately structured which appeared to have been endorsed during the visit by the Ofsted “link” inspector, Bryan Davies. The Principal was checking whether correspondence with the link inspector could be taken to the monthly funding agency case conferences. While there were clear signs of improvement across the College, for which the board felt the Executive should be congratulated, it was not possible to predict the result of a re-inspection. The Principal advised that key factors would be the success rates for 2012/13, lesson observations and the processes in place planning for next year. The Deputy Principal also pointed out that the Wider Leadership Team were now better established in their roles and had contributed to the improvement leading to increased confidence.

Governors queried how engaged managers were with the data and it was explained that the most recent performance reviews had been data driven, with auto calculate used to predict success rates. Bryan Davies had observed one of these reviews and had been complimentary about the

level of detail and engagement. It was acknowledged that while the Wider Leadership Team understood and engaged with the data, there was more work to be done College-wide. The PIAP was available on the College's Document Management System although it was accepted that it was a very large document and there may be more value in managers extracting relevant parts for their teams. Governors suggested that one way of evidencing commitment to quality awareness was through departmental meeting minutes.

The report was noted.

13.112 Principal's Report

The Principal reported that the visit from the link inspector had been largely positive. The day had focussed on performance management, quality assurance, and improving teaching, learning and assessment. The focus for the next meeting had been agreed. The third visit would be the monitoring visit, the outcome of which would be published. Two case conferences had also been held where the College was given the opportunity to demonstrate progress made to the funding agencies. While the Executive were encouraged by the feedback received so far, the Principal stressed that the new FE Commissioner would be in place from August and it was not yet known whether this would have implications for the College.

It was acknowledged that there was a delicate balance between driving performance and keeping staff positive. The staff survey had been received by the College and while it had not yet been analysed, the response rate appeared to have declined from the previous year, although was still higher than in 2010/11. Governors commented that in their experience, it was usual to receive negative feedback during periods of transformation. The Principal felt that the majority of staff were responding well, especially considering the pace of change and that she had received positive correspondence. However it was acknowledged that some staff were finding the process difficult and there had been an increase in active disciplinaries, grievances and capability cases. The Board felt it would be appropriate for the Chair to communicate to staff that their efforts had been recognised.

Act: VT

The Board were pleased to hear that the number of applications had increased and steps had been taken to make the enrolment experience as smooth as possible, with existing students being re-enrolled before the end of the summer term.

13.113 Performance Dashboard

Governors asked for clarification on what action had been taken regarding any red rated items, particularly in respect of apprenticeships. The VPPBD informed the Board that as a result of the Ofsted inspection outcome, the College was unlikely to be able to increase the size of its contract for apprenticeship delivery. However, the College was reducing the amount it subcontracted to other providers and increasing the amount it delivered directly; the College would outturn 20-25% more than it did the previous year in-house, though it would not achieve its own target for the year. Some access to sub-contracting would be retained so that the College was able to respond customer needs, but it was acknowledged direct delivery would be better financially for the College and would enable greater utilisation of staff. Although the apprenticeship target would be missed, work had been undertaken to increase the volumes of apprenticeships in-house and ensure they were treated as part of the core College business rather than peripheral with managers mapping qualifications to accommodate starts throughout the year and it was anticipated direct delivery could double over the next couple of years.

The Board noted that retention for 16-18 year olds was encouraging while retention for 19+ was a little below target at 84.8% compared to the College target of 87.2%. It was acknowledged there were certain courses which had used a higher proportion of temporary staff with mixed results.

The Deputy Principal assured the Board that work was on-going to ensure students the following year received a more consistent and higher quality experience. The VPC also emphasised that the initial assessment process had been reviewed so that students were on the right course to begin with.

353 observations of teaching and learning (OTLs) had been carried out which meant 90% were complete. 80% had been judged effective. The remaining OTLs would be completed by the end of the Autumn term. The link inspector had recommended that the College should consider reducing the time for re-observing after a practice not yet effective grade has been awarded but staff had yet to be consulted on this.

The report was noted.

13.114 Risk Management

The Board noted that the risks associated with the College's financial position had increased. Risk reference 12/04 "The College may fail to make the cultural change necessary to transform and improve the College" remained red rated.

The report was noted.

13.115 First 4 Skills – Item 1

This minute has been deemed confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information

13.116 First 4 Skills – Item 2

This minute has been deemed confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information

13.117 Environmental & Sustainability Policy

The Board had retained approval for the Environmental and Sustainability Policy which had last been approved by the Finance, Estates and General Purpose Committee in March 2009. A revised policy was presented at the May 2013 Board meeting which had not been approved as governors wanted the policy to be more aspirational and detailed. They felt it should include students and enrichment as well as linking with the University Technical College (UTC) and the green academy at Vauxhall Road. Governors also referred to the previous policy being embedded within the curriculum.

Governors were disappointed that the re-presented policy and strategy lacked benchmarking and measurable or contextual information. It was commented that it appeared dated, with some redundant terminology and did not reflect the College's aspirational aims.

While the Board accepted that they needed to see the policy as it had last been reviewed in 2009, they were clear that they expected the policy to be much improved before it was presented again. The policy was not approved. **Act: DMCI**

13.118 Review of Instrument and Articles of Government

This item was deferred pending legal advice on the changes made to the Instrument and Articles of Government.

13.119 Draft Board Business Cycle.

The Board were asked to note there had been three changes to the draft calendar previously circulated:

- The October Board meeting had been rescheduled for the 15th October 2013;
- The September Search and Governance meeting had been removed; and

- The February meeting of the Finance, Estates, and General Purposes (FEGP) Committee had been moved to March with additional meetings to monitor the financial position scheduled for February and April – with exact dates for all three to be confirmed.

The business cycle was noted.

The Deputy Principal pointed out that the College calendar had changed and asked that the updated version be sent to all governors. **Act: CL**

13.120 Appointments to Committees

The Audit Committee had struggled for quoracy over the last year while the FEGP Committee required additional financial expertise since Mr Cearns had stood down. At its last meeting, the Search and Governance Committee reviewed the skills and experience required for each committee along with the expressions of interest from governors. Ms Vivienne Lacey was recommended for appointment to the Audit Committee and Mr Neil Lazenbury was recommended for appointment to the FEGP Committee.

The Board approved both appointments,

13.121 Board Action Plan

The responses to the Board Self-Assessment questionnaires formed the basis of the Board Action Plan which had been reviewed and monitored by the Search and Governance Committee. The Board Action plan had been cross referenced with the Ofsted report to ensure there were no gaps. The areas for improvement suggested by RSM Tenon in their governance review were also incorporated.

It was queried when the next Board Self-Assessment would take place and the Chair advised an additional informal meeting of the Search and Governance Committee would discuss this in September.

13.122 Committee Minutes

FEGP Committee – 28th February 2013

The minutes were noted.

Audit Committee – 6th June 2013

The Chair of the Audit Committee had produced a cover report highlighting the key issues from the meeting and had requested a copy of the First 4 Skills Financial Healthcheck be forwarded to all governors still to receive a copy. He had also met with the VPFCR and was able to report that progress was improving in the consultancy work being carried out by RSM Tenon. The minutes were noted.

Search and Governance Committee – 19th June 2013

The minutes were noted.

13.123 Confidentiality of Items

Item 1 – Applications of the Seal

Item 2 – Budget and Financial Position Update (commercially sensitive information)

Item 14.1 and 14.2 – Commercially sensitive information regarding First 4 Skills

Item 20 – FEGP minutes 13.05-13.11

13.124 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting to discuss the budget and three year financial forecast would be confirmed.

The Board offered its congratulations to Mr Booth who had been elected as the President of the Student Union.

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

13.125-13.129 Confidential Minutes held by Clerk.

Meeting Closed at 7.45pm