



**Minutes of the Board meeting
held on 7th February 2012 at 4.15 pm**

Present

Ms Louise Barry)	External Governors
Ms Susan Carmichael)	
Ms Sara Carthy)	
Mr Tony Cearn)	
Mr Tony Cobain)	
Ms Clare Crowther)	
Mr Peter Grieve)	
Professor Gerald Pillay)	
Ms Vivienne Tyler (Chair))	
Mr David Wilson)	
Ms Martha Harris		Staff Governor (Teaching)
Mr John Nolan		Staff Governor (Business Support)
Ms Lenka Cermakova		Student Governor
Mr Joseph Davison		Student Governor
Ms Elaine Bowker		Principal

In Attendance

Mr Mike Doyle	Assistant Principal Resources
Ms Nancy Jenkins	Clerk to the Board
Ms Christine Lenderyou	Secretary to the Clerk
Mr Brendan Ruane	Vice Principal Finance and Resources

12.01 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Ms C Dove, Cllr N Small and Ms M Allen. Apologies for early departure were received from Ms S Carthy.

12.02 Declarations of Interest

The Principal and Vice Principal Finance and Resources declared an interest in item 20 (Remuneration Committee recommendations).

12.03 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2011 were agreed as a true record. Ms Carthy joined the meeting during this item.

12.04 Matters arising from the Minutes

12.04.01 Outcome of actions from previous meetings

The Clerk's report on progress with actions was noted.

12.04.02 College Name (11.124)

The application to change the name of the College was still with the Secretary of State and the decision could take up to 14 weeks.

12.04.03 Investors in People Status (11.149 Principal's Report)

The Principal, the Chair, Ms Carmichael and Ms Carthy had attended the presentation of the Investors in People (IIP) Gold Standard award and received feedback from the assessor.

12.04.04 College Self Assessment Report (SAR) 2010/11 (11.158)

The Principal reported that information received since the College SAR had been submitted to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) indicated that a change in grade was advisable. She sought the Board's permission to remove the SAR from the SFA's website and review the content and grades before resubmission. Governors concurred that the SAR should be as accurate as possible; the revised College SAR would be brought to the 20th March meeting.

Act: EB

12.05 Principal's Report

There was no formal Principal's Report as updates were provided in later agenda items.

12.06 Performance Dashboard

Performance dashboard data in relation to financial indicators, student numbers and funding was noted.

Financial indicators were all flagged as 'green' with the exception of 'amber' against Cash-based Operating surplus; plans were in place to improve this position and it was anticipated that this would also change to green.

Standard Learner Numbers (SLN) needed careful monitoring, particularly for the 16-18 cohort, as flagged at the January Strategic Planning event. Regarding Adult Learner Responsive, there was a possibility that student numbers might be achieved, but not the full funding target.

A sample key performance indicators report from another college was presented as an appendix. Feedback from governors included:

- Present the information within the College's strategic framework.
- It would be useful to see a correlation between lesson observations and retention/attendance.
- Attendance was a good indicator of retention so it was important to show both.
- Present the operating surplus as a percentage of the budget.
- Include external/national benchmarking where available.
- The 'right' information, rather than 'too much' information was required.
- The Senior Management Team (SMT) were asked to suggest tolerances, ie the tipping points that turned 'green' to 'amber' and 'amber' to 'red'.
- Averages could conceal areas of poor performance so there needed to be a mechanism to flag these.
- Include information on staff continuing professional development.
- Include key Health and Safety data such as injury statistics, sickness absence rates.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) would discuss how to implement and report on the above suggestions.

Act: SMT

12.07 Acquisitions Strategy Update (Confidential Item)

The Vice Principal Finance and Resources (VPFR) reported on progress towards purchase of an independent training provider XXXXXX

It was agreed that questions and proposals would be considered in detail at the next Finance, Estates and General Purposes (FE&GP) Committee meeting before final proposals were brought to the Board.

Act: BR/FE&GP Ctte

The next five items were taken out of sequence to maintain the natural flow of discussions.

12.08 Performance – Three Year Action Plan

The key actions being put in place to improve student performance over the next three years were outlined by the Principal. 2011/12 had been labelled 'Year Zero' due to the late identification of the College's position and the recent change in Principal. Whilst some progress was expected in 2011/12, it was anticipated that the considerable improvement necessary would occur in the subsequent three years.

The appendix set out percentage improvement targets for retention, achievement and success rates from 2010/11 onwards in order to take the College to the 50th percentile in Year 3. It was stressed that it should not be underestimated how challenging this would be, bearing in mind that the College had not made a 1% improvement in-year during the last three years. Nevertheless the targets had to be realistic to stand up to scrutiny.

The targets would be reviewed each time new data was published. High performing areas would be expected to improve but not necessarily at the same rate as poorly performing areas.

Governors felt that the first year targets were substantial and it would be sensible to review these at the end of the year. It was queried whether the targets should be increased but the Principal felt that target setting was becoming more systematic and that, although benchmarking and performance were important, the actions taken to improve were more so. It was commented that average performance figures by their nature concealed specific areas of poor performance and that if these areas were dealt with the overall averages would increase.

The report was noted and the action plan endorsed.

12.09 Student Performance

The Board noted a report from the Vice Principal Curriculum which set out action taken and planned in 2010/11 to improve student performance. Many of these were contained within the three year action plan considered in the previous item.

Governors asked which actions were currently in place. They were advised that actions to deal with attendance issues were in place; some of those dealing with performance were still in the process of being implemented. Where there was evidence of poor performance there needed to be an understanding of why this was the case and it was important to ensure appropriate training was in place. Staff would be supported, but robust management would be necessary if support and training did not lead to improvement.

12.10 Growth – Three Year Action Plan

In presenting the Three Year Action Plan for growth the Principal commented that this linked to performance in that one of the most effective methods of growth was to retain students. The growth plan should not be considered a 'finished product' as opportunities would arise over the forthcoming years and the College would need to be flexible to respond to a changing environment.

Appointment of the Vice Principal and Assistant Principal for Partnerships and Business Development would ease the pressure on the Senior Post Holders. At present it was an enormous undertaking to be overseeing the day to day business of the College while at the same time implementing new strategies.

The Board endorsed the Growth action plan, noting that it incorporated aspects discussed at the recent strategic planning days and earlier meetings.

12.11 People – Three Year Action Plan

In her report the Principal made reference to the governors' recent strategic planning workshop on HR (human resource) requirements to transform the College into a customer-focused, High Performing Organisation. The report identified the priority deliverables for 2011-14.

Governors commented that the three year action plan was an enormous undertaking. In addition, as the success of the People Strategy would underpin the Growth and Performance Strategies, it would be essential to have HR professionals in place with the capabilities to support both staff and managers. The Principal confirmed that in the short term expertise was being bought in via consultants; the requirement for additional roles in the HR team had been included in the plan.

Governors queried whether there was sufficient capacity to progress the action plan in the event that the College were to be inspected, bearing in mind the additional pressures on resources an inspection entailed. The Principal felt that the plan would have to be progressed, not least because capacity to improve was one of the areas to be demonstrated during inspection.

The staff governor (business support) asked how the plan would be disseminated to staff. Transparency was required and the Principal felt that it was important to hold another whole-College staff event. The Principal's Briefing sessions were continuing and there would be sessions with College managers as well as Question and Answer sessions. In addition, discussions would be held with staff to gather feedback on different aspects.

It was asked how Protocol and other agency staff would fit in to a change management programme and it was confirmed that the College wanted to reduce its reliance on agency staff.

Celebrating success was a vital component and governors expressed satisfaction that this had been included in the plan.

The HR consultant would be invited to make a presentation to the next Board meeting.

Act: EB/NJ

The People Three Year action plan was endorsed.

12.12 Staff Disability Leave

The Board noted a report put forward by the staff governors.

The College had previously (2008) signed up to the recommendations of the national Disability Equality Implementation Group which were based on the findings of a report by the Commission for Disabled Staff in Life Long Learning (CDSLL). A key recommendation had been to ensure that each lifelong learning organisation achieved sound policies and practices on disability absence. It also emphasised that disabled staff should be key and active agents of change. The Board was asked to reaffirm its commitment to the recommendations of the CDSLL recommendations, in particular the recommendation for a Disability Leave Policy to be established and for the explicit involvement of disabled staff. The Board was also asked to monitor the progress regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the CDSLL.

The management response stated that disabled staff and unions would be consulted before the revised sickness absence/disability policy was finalised.

Governors were happy to support the establishment of a disability leave policy and the above recommendations were approved.

Act: NJ/HR Management

12.13 Finance, Estates and General Purposes Committee Membership

The Board approved Mr Peter Grieve's appointment to the FE&GP Committee.

12.14 Current Significant Risks

The VPFR presented a summary of the current significant risks requiring close management.

It was clarified that the reason that the College was currently delivering lower funded Guided Learning Hours per student than previously related to students studying slimmer programmes, for instance where they had dropped subjects or had chosen to study two A Level subjects rather than three. This needed to be addressed as, irrespective of funding, students were lowering their potential UCAS points score and therefore limiting their progression options.

Regarding the risk report format, governors asked for risk scales to be reinstated in the report alongside the text commentary. The Principal suggested that substantive reports should clearly reference the three strategic risk areas of growth, performance and people. Mr Cobain had a format of risk report that he would share for circulation. **Act: AC/NJ/BR**

12.15 Draft minutes of Committee Meetings

The following Committee minutes were noted: Audit (29 November 2011), Finance, Estates and General Purposes (24 November 2011) and Search and Governance (23 November 2011).

12.16 Confidentiality of Items

The following items were deemed confidential:

- Item 7 Acquisitions Strategy
- Item 19 Confidential Minutes of 1st November 2011 Board Meeting
- Item 20 Minutes and Recommendations of 24th January 2012 Remuneration Committee
- Item 21 Confidential Item

All staff other than the Principal and Clerk left the meeting at this point.

12.17 Confidential Minutes of 29th November 2012 Board meeting

Confidential minute held by the Clerk.

12.18 Minutes and Recommendations of the 24th January 2012 Remuneration Committee

Confidential minute held by the Clerk.

12.19 Confidential Item

Confidential minute held by the Clerk.

The meeting closed at 6.53pm.