

**Minutes of the Board meeting
held on 8th February 2011 at 4.15 pm**

Present

Cllr Karen Afford)	External Governors
Ms Louise Barry)	
Ms Susan Carmichael)	
Ms Sara Carthy)	
Mr Tony Cobain)	
Ms Clare Crowther)	
Ms Claire Dove, MBE)	
Prof Gerald Pillay)	
Mr Shazan Qureshi)	
Dr John Ritchie, MBE)	
Ms Vivienne Tyler (Chair))	
Mr David Wilson)	
Ms Sue Navarro		Staff Governor (Business Support)
Ms Maureen Mellor, MBE		Principal

In Attendance

Ms Marie Allen, MBE	Vice Principal Curriculum
Mrs Gill Banks	Assistant Principal 14 – 19 Curriculum
Mr Mike Doyle	Assistant Principal Resources
Ms Nancy Jenkins	Clerk to the Board
Ms Ann Lees	Assistant Principal Student Services and Support
Ms Irene Loh Lynn	Vice Principal Corporate Services
Mr Brendan Ruane	Vice Principal Finance and Resources
Mr Barry Sherriff	Assistant Principal Adult Skills and Employer Links

11.01 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Cearns, Ms A Fillingham, Ms M Harris and Cllr Nick Small. Apologies for late arrival were noted from Ms S Carmichael and for potential early departure from Cllr K Afford, Ms C Crowther, Ms C Dove and Mr B Sherriff.

11.02 Declarations of Interest

It was noted that items 9.1 and 9.2 (Disciplinary & Dismissal and Grievance policies) affected staff but that there was no necessity for the staff governors to withdraw for those items.

11.03 Strategic Planning Presentation

The Board received a presentation on "*Becoming an Enterprising College*" from the Assistant Principal Curriculum. This was in the environment of considerable changes announced by the Coalition government, funding cuts and demographic downturn.

Ms L Barry, Ms S Carmichael and Ms S Dove joined the meeting during the presentation.

11.04 Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2010 were agreed as a correct record.

11.05 Matters arising from the Minutes

11.05.01 Outcome of Actions from the Previous Meeting

The Clerk's report was noted.

11.05.02 Safeguarding Training for Governors (10.129.02)

The Clerk was undertaking on-line Safeguarding training to test the usefulness of one module aimed at governors. A repeat of the June 2010 Safeguarding training would be arranged. **Act: NJ**

It was noted that the government was reviewing the Vetting and Barring and Criminal Records regime. The outcomes would need to be communicated to staff as well as governors.

11.05.03 Executive Restrictions Monitoring (10.136)

The Chair, Principal and Clerk had met to discuss the format and content of reports so as to provide information the Board required at the same time as addressing executive restrictions monitoring. At the same meeting a number of small adjustments to some executive restrictions had been made, and incorporated into the Board Policy manual which had just been issued.

The reporting format and information mapping would be discussed with the Vice Principals prior to future Board reports. **Act: NJ/MM/Vice Principals**

11.06 Principal's Report

The Principal reported on information received in December from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) which provided indications of funding allocations for 2011/11. For Adult Skills an overall reduction of 4% (£600k) was anticipated, but the final funding statement would not be available until the end of March. At this stage, based on guidance from the YPLA, a reduction in 16-18 learner responsive funding and increase in 16-18 apprenticeship funding was anticipated, giving a total reduction of 5% (£650k). YPLA funding would not be confirmed until the end of March.

Together with anticipated reductions in Higher Education funding and schools related income, a potential reduction of 4% (£1.8 million) in 2011/12 funding was anticipated.

Local MPs had been kept updated on the impact of the government's decision to abolish Educational Maintenance Allowances, and the college had been mentioned twice during debates in parliament on this issue. A forthcoming issue was the impact on ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) of the removal of free tuition for students not in receipt of 'active' benefits. The deputy Liberal Democrat leader, Simon Hughes, would visit the College and meet students on 11th February in his role as minister for funding.

The College had received a 'Healthy Further Education Recognition Award' for its commitment to providing outstanding health and welfare services.

The 10th annual Research Day on 6th May would be on the theme of 'Learning from Teaching' and the final programme would be circulated to governors. This year students were being encouraged to submit original research and a prize would be awarded.

A College chef, Gary Hindley, and 2 catering students had won an Italian competition prize for bread production and volume. Gary's focaccia recipe had been requested by one of the Italian chefs!

Mr Sherriff left the meeting at this point.

11.07 Performance Dashboard

Information provided in the Dashboard report on key performance indicators was noted.

There was underperformance in achievement of 16-18 year old student numbers and the associated predicted funding as well as underperformance in recruitment of school students. Nevertheless, the final income target was expected to be met.

Since the report had been produced the Employer Related Work Based Learning numbers had increased from 74 to 157, improving the colour rating from red to amber for that target.

11.08 Budget and Strategic Planning Timetable

The report from the Vice Principal Finance and Resources (VPFR) set out the proposed timetable for the preparation of the budget and strategic plan for 2011/12 as well as the three year financial forecast for 2011/12 to 2013/14.

The Board approved the budget timetable.

11.09 Human Resources Policies

11.09.01 Disciplinary and Dismissal

The Vice Principal Corporate Services (VPCS) reported that the Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy and Procedure had been revised in line with the ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) code of practice following changes in employment legislation. Reference had also been made to AoC (Association of Colleges) policy guidance. A key change was the removal of the facility to issue a formal oral warning. Appeals against dismissal would now be heard by the Principal, removing any requirement for a governors' panel. This had already been the practice for a number of years via delegated authority from the Board to the Principal.

It was suggested that it should be made clearer in the earlier sections that dismissal due to gross misconduct could override the need to follow the full informal/stage 1 and stage 2 process.

Act: ILL

Subject to the above, the revised Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy and Procedure was approved.

11.09.02 Grievance

The Board considered changes to the Grievance Policy and Procedure which had been revised to reflect the ACAS code of practice. The key change was the removal of the 'modified grievance procedure' previously used when grievances were raised by staff following employment; such grievances would now be addressed under the standard procedures.

The revised Grievance Policy and Procedure was approved.

11.10 Governor Expenses Policy

The Board considered a paper from the Clerk proposing changes to the policy for payment of expenses to governors.

The Search and Governance Committee recommended that, in line with staff mileage rates, the car mileage rate be reduced from 40p to 35p per mile; that staff subsistence rates be included as a guide only; and that there should be no maximum limit for mileage.

It was agreed that the car mileage rate would be 35p per mile and that the staff subsistence rates would be included as a guide. However, following discussion, it was felt that in order to encourage use of public transport, there should be a recommended maximum radius of 100

miles for a single car journey (as for staff). The Clerk would note any mileage claims above that radius that had been approved in exceptional circumstances. **Act: NJ**

It was noted that, although governors were unpaid, valid car insurance for 'business use' was nevertheless required for governors carrying out their role.

11.11 Action taken to improve Success Rates and Courses below the Minimum Levels of Performance in 2009/10

The Board received a report from the Vice Principal Curriculum. For 2009/10 the College had lost some ground in its qualification success rate (QSR) performance but had reduced the proportion of provision below the Minimum Level of Performance (MLP). The challenge for the College was to continue to reduce the proportion of provision below MLP and address areas of concern in QSR performance.

The College's retention, achievement and success rates for 2009/10 produced from Goldmine (internal) data had been reported to the December meeting. Since then, two sets of reports had been received from the external Data Service. The QSR reports informed inspection judgements by comparison to national rates and examination of three year trends. Areas showing decline were: Adult Long Level 1 success rates (particularly Long Entry Level in ESOL), 16-18 Long Level 3 success rates (particularly GCE AS), and Adult retention rates generally. The MLP reports reflected the proportion of the College's delivery that fell below MLP thresholds for funding and was detailed in an appendix to the report. The College did not have a 'material' volume of success rates below MLP so would not receive a notice to improve for its long or short provision. However, there were some sector areas at risk.

A robust action plan was in place to improve overall performance, key aspects of which were outlined in the report and expanded on in response to questions from governors. For example, to help improve AS overall success rates a 'critical friend' had been used to carry out a review of provision; a relationship found very helpful by the faculty with the resultant action plan improving the vigour of the formative assessment process. To improve achievement and success rates a new method of performance monitoring had been introduced, a critical friend would carry out internal inspections and meetings were taking place with Heads of Faculty and Heads of Section. The involvement of Advanced Lecturers was a key aspect of improving teaching and learning and to address attendance issues in particular.

The meetings in faculties paid attention to the views of student representatives, for example, avoidance of bunching of assignments. The importance of front loading of student engagement in improving retention was emphasised.

It was commented that the items listed under the Key Performance Indicator column were action points rather than measurable targets. A more detailed plan lay underneath the summary version in the report.

The report was noted.

11.12 Current Significant Risks

The VPFR's report on current significant risks was noted. The key areas of concern were: funding changes in year (related to removal of Train to Gain and Integrated Employment Skills) and anticipated for 2011/12; achievement of student numbers for 16-18 year olds and recruitment of Adult apprentices; curriculum changes and partner engagement to support increased apprentice numbers and access adult funding; and the potential for loss of stability due to changes to key senior staff.

Forthcoming risks such as those arising from the abolition of Educational Maintenance Allowances would have a greater impact in 2011/12.

11.13 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults: Termly Update

The Assistant Principal Student Services and Support provided a report on the 16 Safeguarding cases dealt with during the Autumn term 2010. This was roughly the same number as the equivalent period in 2009. The number of serious cases was increasing, particularly of students with mental health issues. All cases were dealt with promptly and appropriately by College designated staff. Three cases were referred to Liverpool's Safeguarding Unit. Pre-entry information received from partner agencies was still sometimes inadequate.

Governors enquired about e-safety and how email and internet use was monitored, for example to pick up on cyber bullying or stalking. They were informed that the E-Safety Policy for staff and students had recently been created and publicised. Key aspects would be imparted during induction and via other means such as screen savers. An element of staff training was about keeping staff safe as well as students. Surveillance of all users at all times was too great a task. The College was reliant on students feeling comfortable enough to tell someone about any incident, in which case there would be surveillance to find evidence. The newly created College Facebook site was subject to random monitoring by senior IT staff.

The report was noted.

11.14 Human Resources Policies

11.14.01 Recognition and Procedural Document for Trade Unions

The Board noted a report from the VPCS on the Recognition and Procedural Document for Trade Unions which replaced the Consultation, Negotiation and Collective Disputes Procedure. The new procedure removed the provision for governor Dispute panels, with matters being dealt with through the Joint Trade Union Consultation Committee.

11.14.02 Ethics Policy

The revised Ethics Policy was noted. This set out clear expectations regarding staff behaviour; provided guidelines in respect of staff relationships with other staff, students or close personal or business associates; and supported the College's Safeguarding commitment.

11.15 Draft minutes of Committee Meetings

Minutes of the 18th November 2010 Finance, Estates and General Purpose Committee and 24th November 2010 Search and Governance Committee were noted. The Clerk and Mr Cobain were working on electronic versions of the skills audit and Board assessment questionnaires to be circulated to governors.

11.16 Confidentiality of Items

The following items were deemed confidential:

- Items 19 & 20 Confidential minutes of 19th October and 14th December 2010 Board meetings and matters arising from those minutes.
- Item 21 Remuneration Committee minutes of 7th December 2010.

11.17 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 22nd March 2011 at 4.15pm.

The staff governor and staff other than the Principal and Clerk then left the meeting.

11.18 Confidential Minutes of Board Meetings held on 19th October and 14th December 2010

These were approved as true records.

11.19 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Confidential minute held by the Clerk.

11.20 Remuneration Committee Minutes of 7th December 2010

The minutes were noted.

The meeting closed at 6.25pm.