

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2014

1. **PRESENT**

Mr S McCracken (Chair), Mr P Cropley, Mr M Gallagher, Mrs A Mosek, Mr P Scarlett and Mr B Walder

Also in attendance: Mrs F Grady (Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality), Mrs J Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Mr K Tharby (Director of Workforce Development) and Mrs J Webb (Minute Taker)

Meeting attendance: 100%

There were no apologies for absence.

2. **TO APPOINT A CHAIR FOR 2014-15**

Having been duly nominated and seconded Steve McCracken was appointed as Chair of the Committee for 2014-15.

3. **TO APPOINT A VICE-CHAIR FOR 2014-15**

Having been duly nominated and seconded Bob Walder was appointed as Vice-Chair of the Committee for 2014-15.

4. **ACTION LOG**

The Action Log from the meeting held on 18 June 2014 was reviewed by Members.

Amanda Mosek informed Members that the Grammar School had advised that their land was no longer available for purchase or lease.

Janet Hemmant had been asked by Members to provide a report on Cresswell Close for the meeting on 23 September but suggested that this be deferred until a later date. This suggestion was agreed by Members. The lease has a further two years to run and it is the intention that the property would not be leased beyond that date.

With regard to a pay award to staff, Amanda Mosek informed Members that no decision can be made until the final year end accounts have been produced. The Association of Colleges have just recommended a 1% pay rise however the main unions are taking strike action about this issue.

5. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2013 were approved and there were no Matters Arising.

6. NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE COMMITTEE

Steve McCracken informed Members that he and Amanda Mosek had recently visited Walsall College, at his request, as they were rated as an Outstanding College by Ofsted and thought it would be good to see how they work from a Finance and General Purposes Committee point of view. The visit had been triggered by Bob Walder's question, "do we ask the right questions at this meeting or are we missing the point in some way?" Steve McCracken said he was interested to see what data set they presented, how it was distributed and how it was used. The 'weight' of the information appeared to be approximately the same as that at Boston College, as it does appear to be across the whole sector. The one thing that Walsall College do differently to Boston College is that they have two slides presented to the Board with finance headlines. The other difference was the actual structure of their Finance and General Purposes Committee which is a Finance and Resources Committee. They have a standard agenda which at one meeting would have a Human Resources bias and another meeting would have a Capital and Investment bias. Steve's opinion was the Boston College's Finance and General Purposes Committee had concentrated a lot on the capital side of things but not particularly the HR side, especially over the past few years. He asked for thoughts and comments from the Members.

Fiona Grady explained how staff utilisation is monitored.

Keith Tharby outlined current HR monitoring procedures.

Bob Walder agreed with the suggestion of Steve McCracken's that the new system would be a good way forward but advised caution in that the whole practice be adopted slowly. He also mentioned the Property Committee and suggested that this be brought in with the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Phil Scarlett suggested that Walsall College be approached to ask them what they actually produce for their Corporation meeting, and this was agreed to be done.

After further discussion Members agreed that the way the Finance and General Purposes Committee report to Corporation be changed with immediate effect and two slides will be produced for presentation at the meeting scheduled for 15 October 2014.

Action points noted were:

- It was agreed that Janet Hemmant would change the way reporting is done and will produce the two slides which she will forward to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- Amanda Mosek to contact Walsall College seeking information on their style of reports which can then be debated at the Board meeting in October.

Bob Walder moved on to give feedback from the Search and Governance meeting which had been held prior to this meeting.

7. FINANCE

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Corporate Services.

Janet Hemmant informed Members that the year-end accounts were still being finalised and it was anticipated that they would result in a surplus once all outstanding transactions have gone through.

Janet Hemmant then reminded Members that she had sent out the pensions valuation to them which was very disappointing. Steve McCracken commented that he had found the document very difficult to understand but unfortunately it was the way it was presented by the College's pensions administrators. He said he would find it useful if a summary sheet was attached to the front of the document in future.

Bob Walder enquired if Members thought it would be useful to ask the College's Auditors to give a report to the Board on what the impact on pensions will be. This was agreed by Members.

A discussion took place regarding the eligibility of staff to join the pension scheme(s) and Keith Tharby advised how recent changes had been implemented.

After discussion it was agreed that a letter should be sent to the pensions administrator querying how investments are managed and to also argue the case for some College representation on their investment board.

Moving onto enrolments Fiona Grady gave an overview of the current position advising Members that numbers are a little down as compared to this time last year for the 16-18 year olds. This in part is due to local schools having an aggressive recruitment drive to retain their students over the summer period. However, this is being counter balanced by a very proactive recruitment drive from the College.

8. **PROPERTY**

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Corporate Services on Property.

Janet Hemmant gave Members an update on various property matters advising them that the College was nearing the end of planned improvement work with just the astro-turf to be contracted for at the Peter Paine Performance Centre. She informed Members that a capital funding bid had been made for a Technology and Workshop Centre. A more detailed bid would be submitted by the end of the year should the first part of the application be successful, although Amanda Mosek was not overly optimistic. There is a real need for additional workshop space and expansion of the Performing Arts facility and the College is working closely with both Mick Gallagher to try secure Arts Council funding for this development.

Janet Hemmant then went on to give a short update on redundant premises of the College:

- Skegness – the College is currently awaiting a response from the landlord on proposals to move forward.
- Cyden Homes – the deposit has been paid by them for the De Montfort site.
- SAGE – two proposals have been and being progressed.

9. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Corporate Services.

The Committee noted performance against 2013-14 targets. With regard to percentage attendance at meetings, discussion took place regarding the figures which had been skewed slightly by the non-attendance of student governors at some meetings. A suggestion was made that Student Governors could be noted as welcome to attend as

observers but not actually be part of the Committee body if attendance was likely to be an issue.

Members of the Committee were then asked to consider what targets they wished to propose to the Corporation for the forthcoming academic year. These were agreed as:

- 82% attendance.
- Reviewing the operation of the Committee and changing the name from Finance and General Purposes Committee to Finance and Resources Committee.
- Improving the presentation of financial information to the Corporation.
- Monitoring of the College's cash-flow position.

11. **EXTERNAL CONTACT TO THE COLLEGE**

Steve McCracken and Peter Cropley both voiced their comments how in recent weeks they have had problems making telephone contact with the College. Amanda Mosek replied saying that these issues had already been addressed. However, she reassured them both that she would look into the matter(s) further and conduct some mystery shopping with the aid of other members of the Senior Leadership Team.

12. **ATTENDANCE OF FINANCE MANAGER AT FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Steve McCracken queried that although in the past the College Finance Manager has attended these meetings, but during the year of experimental shared services with the Boston Borough Council, it was not proposed that finance staff should attend.

Amanda Mosek said she would be happy to review this proposal in six months' time especially if there were any problems. She assured Members that the Vice Principal: Corporate Services would always be in attendance at the meetings.

Janet Hemmant went on to explain how the Finance Office was being managed and what the role of the Accountant and the Finance Manager were now that the new structure is in place.

A routine of pre F&GP meetings attended by the F&GP Chair, Director of Finance and the College Accountant have been put in place to address accounts queries ahead of F&GP meetings. These have the potential to mitigate accounts issues but are not a guarantee that all the queries members might raise will have been addressed in advance.

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee will be held at 6.00 pm on Monday 17 November 2014.