

B O S T O N C O L L E G E**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOSTON COLLEGE CORPORATION
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2014**

1. PRESENT

Mr P Cropley (Chair), Mr N Ball, Mr M Gallagher, Mr D Hanson, Mr S McCracken, Ms O McMahon, Mrs A Mosek, Mr A Reynolds, Mrs S Richards, Mr P Scarlett, Mr B Walder, Mr D White and Mrs H Wright

Meeting attendance 81%

Also in attendance: Mr P Collins (Director of Business Development), Mrs F Grady (Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality), Mrs J Lau (Finance Manager), Mr K Tharby (Director of Workforce Development) and Ms K Wood (external advisor to the Board)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J Hemmant, Mr C Simpson and Mr J Woodward

The Board sent their good wishes for a speedy recovery to Mrs J Hemmant and the Chairman asked that a bouquet of flowers be sent to her. It was also noted for the record that this was the first occasion when she was not present at a Board meeting during her lengthy service as Clerk to the Corporation.

Not present was Iwona Lebedowicz.

Minutes were taken by Mrs J Webb (PA to Principal) on behalf of Mrs J Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation) who was absent through recuperation following a recent operation

2. PRESENTATION

Amanda Mosek gave a presentation on “How the College ensures that the curriculum is responsive to local needs”. Amanda Mosek had asked the Governors what they would like development on and this particular topic had been requested by two governors. The presentation gave an overview of how the College determines its curriculum and the nature of the work done with local employers to ensure that local skills needs are being met. Governors were invited to ask questions.

Peter Cropley enquired how we could remove barriers due to the reluctance of employers wanting to pay for training. Amanda Mosek’s response was that the College works hard to try to understand individual businesses and to establish good relationships and trust. Organisation needs analysis is undertaken to ensure a full understanding of each business rather than simply contacting employers and trying to sell training aggressively which is what some training providers do. The College does have excellent relationships with a number of local businesses, for example, Rolec and Peugeot. It was noted that the College is unable to complete with some training providers but what we can do is give a good service at a reasonable cost. George Bell from the Business Development Team together with his three team members go out to businesses to engage them in what the College can offer. They are supported by staff in the curriculum areas too so it is a joint approach.

Bob Walder commented that he was pleased about the relationships within the local agri-food industry and wondered how the College could make greater in-roads into this sector. Amanda Mosek informed the Board that the College had recently held a

very successful Technology and Engineering event which was supported by local employers some of whom were from the agri-food sector. Another event is planned for 30 April which will focus on employers in the 'field to fork' sectors. It was noted that Holbeach Academy, Bishop Burton College and Riseholme are specialist providers in agri food.

Steve McCracken informed the Board that Bishop Burton College has got large capital at their disposal and have had the go-ahead to build at Lincolnshire Showground. He commented on the fact that the College was proposing to begin offering Access to Science and Engineering courses and felt that the Russell Group universities had struggled to secure students with adequate mathematical ability for their courses so he felt that the College would struggle here. Fiona Grady responded by saying that Access and HE provision at the College does cover core Maths and English but it is anticipated that there will be drop in Access students this year due to GCSE requirements as standard.

There were no further questions. The presentation will be emailed to members of the Board not in attendance.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Peter Cropley advised members that there had been two resignations from the Board namely, Tony Lascelles who has moved out of the area and Mandla Ndhlovu who is taking up a position in the Milton Keynes area. This has resulted in three vacancies on the Board now and Peter Cropley commented that he would welcome suggestions for new members.

Bob Walder advised that at the recent Governance and Search Committee meeting two applications had been considered but the Committee felt they could not recommend either as full Board members. One had been offered and accepted, a position as an external member of the Standards Committee. Further details of the meeting were annotated in the Minutes from that meeting.

Besides the three vacancies there is also the vacant staff member position and Amanda Mosek assured the Board that this would be recruited to at the earliest opportunity.

4. MINUTES

a) Meeting of the Corporation 11 December 2013

The Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 11 December 2013 having been circulated were agreed and signed as an accurate record.

Kathy Wood gave further feedback on her action point from the previous meeting.

b) Meeting of the Financial & General Purposes Committee 27 January 2014

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 27 January 2014 were received.

Peter Cropley asked the members if they had any questions or comments to be made on this set of Minutes.

Helen Wright asked if the RLQ was anywhere near getting into a profitable situation. This opened up a lengthy and in depth discussion as to whether there was a need to account for each campus as a separate entity. It was agreed that this would be further debated by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. ●

c) Meeting of the Standards Committee 22 January 2014

The Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 22 January 2014 were received.

Peter Cropley asked the members if they had any questions or comments to be made on this set of Minutes.

Kathy Wood commented that on Section 4 of the SAR, last paragraph, highlights strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement – she had asked that this section be brought to the front of the document.

Fiona Grady responded saying that she had taken these comments on board and made changes to the presentation of the strengths and areas for improvement. Members were reminded that the whole document had been rewritten following Sheila Willis' (Ofsted Inspector) recent visit to the College. I

Kathy Wood concluded that it was not a criticism, just an observation, but it had not been recorded in this set of Minutes.

d) Meeting of the Audit Committee 22 November 2013

The Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 22 November 2013 were received.

Peter Cropley asked the members if they had any questions or comments to be made on this set of Minutes and none were put forward.

e) Meeting of the Search and Governance Committee 6 February 2014

The Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee held on 6 February 2014 were received.

Peter Cropley asked the members if they had any questions or comments to be made on this set of Minutes.

Bob Walder commented that the Board need to look at the specification of the sort of person they need to attract and what skills set they could bring to the Board. It was probable that a template would be put together for this purpose.

5. REPORTS

a) Principal's Report

Members received a report from the Principal on a number of strategic and local matters including Key Performance Indicators for the College.

The Principal noted that there had been no change to the proposal to reduce funding for 18 year olds despite considerable lobbying by individual principals and the Association of Colleges. This will have cost implications for the College but it is something that will have to be absorbed.

The Principal provided an update on the meeting with the LEP on 11 February. They had accepted the need to incorporate more information around FE capital into their strategic economic plan and had asked colleges to put in expressions of interest for capital monies. The principal was proposing to submit a joint bid for leadership and management training centres at colleges in conjunction with Lincoln, Stamford, Grimsby and Grantham Colleges and one individual bid to improve Boston College's engineering, manufacturing and technology facilities.

It was noted that the Skills Funding Statement has now been received and the priorities within are what was expected. There is still a strong focus on apprenticeships.

The Principal circulated the latest KPI data sheet and gave an overview of the content therein. It was noted that retention is holding up well and teaching and learning grades are much improved. 79% of grades are now at grade 1 or 2. 4% of sessions are still graded as unsatisfactory and appropriate action is being taken. It was noted that one member of staff in this category has just resigned. The College has received one unsatisfactory EV report which was in the Construction area. It was noted that full time applications are slightly down and a meeting had been held that morning to discuss a strategy to address the situation.

The Principal explained that this was the first time she had been able to bring funding information to the Board this year because the software provided by the Skills Funding Agency has not been working until now. There is still not complete confidence in the data as it is known that there are some glitches in the software that are producing inaccuracies. The situation is the same for all colleges. The College has hit its 16-18 enrolment numbers target but is struggling to meet its adult target and its 16-18 apprenticeship target.

David Hanson asked for clarification on the Single Adult Budget section within the funding KPIs which appeared to differ from the figure in the management accounts. It was explained that the figure in the accounts is actual income received and the figure on the KPI dashboard is the predicted target based on current enrolments.

b) Self-Assessment

Fiona Grady, Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality gave an overview of her report on the Self-Assessment. This has been rewritten following feedback from Sheila Willis, Ofsted inspector to reflect the more positive position that the College is currently in.

Bob Walder commented that the document read very positively that he appreciated all the work that had gone into it. He further commented that on page 39 item 3.18 opening paragraph does not say anything about Spalding, which he thought was perhaps an oversight and in his opinion it should be acknowledged more. Also on page 40 “.....in September 2012 a converted.....” seemed clumsy and suggests “....we converted.....”, otherwise it was an excellent document in his opinion.

Peter Cropley queried one of the value added statistics which appeared to have worsened and asked if it was being addressed. Fiona Grady confirmed that it was and said she would be doing a Value Added report. Peter Cropley asked that this be done for the next Standards meeting.

Mick Gallagher referred to page 36 re J2O staff development programme which the Ofsted inspector really liked. He asked if the 40% take up by staff, as referred to in the report, was likely to rise. Fiona Grady explained that it may do but that it was a voluntary initiative.

Mick Gallagher continued, stating that he felt there was not much on governance within the leadership and management. He suggested that some examples could be included to illustrate how governors drive standards. Amanda Mosek informed the Board that the inspector had suggested there was too much in the leadership and management section on governance so some of the detail had been taken out. She advised that she had been going through minutes from meetings and had compiled a file for inspection to demonstrate governor challenge and also governor focus on teaching and learning. She assured governors that she would be well able to demonstrate to inspectors that governors provided robust challenge to the management team.

Phil Scarlett noted that the paragraph numbering was inaccurate. This was noted.

Derek White asked how the curriculum areas currently graded as 3 were doing and whether the grades were likely to rise this year. Fiona Grady discussed each of the three areas and gave reassurance of how it is hoped they would move forward and improve. Orla McMahon then expanded further on her 'A' levels area.

There were no further questions.

c. Business Plan Update

The Principal explained to the Board how the business plan report had been improved this year to include a RAG rating thus making it clearer to understand. It was noted that an assessment of a green rating had been given for five of the strategic priorities. Priority 4 was giving cause for concern 'to grow our business whilst maintaining financial security'. The concerns centre around the fact that the College is struggling to meet its adult targets and its target for 16-18 apprenticeships. In addition the Skills Support for the Workforce project, the big European Social Fund project is behind profile and likely to be subject to clawback.

A discussion took place as to how the College was trying to address these shortfalls. It was noted that the College had held an employment fair recently to try to source new assessors and lecturers in skills shortage areas. This had successfully attracted 54 people. Peter Cropley asked if we were receiving any referrals from the Job Centre. It was noted that we do but that this is a lot of

competition from other providers and the work is paid very poorly.

d. Finance Report

Janie Lau gave an overview, in Janet Hemmant's absence, of details within her report. An overdraft facility for £500K had been secured until mid-May as a precautionary measure due to the anticipated cash flow position in March. She offered to deliver training for any member of the Board on the management accounts. Mick Gallagher suggested that a short CPD session may be worthwhile and this was readily agreed by all present. Bob Walder thanked the College for securing the overdraft facility in a prompt manner.

Steve McCracken and Keith Tharby had both attended a recent pensions meeting at County Hall and gave feedback from that meeting to the Board. They felt it was quite a worrying meeting and the implications could be vast to the College. There are two pension funds at the College, the Teachers' pension fund and the other is the Lincolnshire County Council scheme and the issues identified relate only to the LCC one. The overall financial performance of the scheme is dire and there are likely to be implications for the College.

Bob Walder voiced his concerns and said that the Board need to take some advice on this serious issue.

There were no further questions or comments.

e. Property Report

Amanda Mosek presented the property report on behalf of Janet Hemmant and summarised by saying that there is a bid in for De Montfort Campus and a meeting to discuss this further on Monday 3 March. Nothing further has been heard from the Grammar School re the sale of a portion of land. The Condition Fund Grant of £500K has been submitted. A copy of the Post Occupancy Evaluation had been included in the property report and members were advised that this would be sent to the Skills Funding Agency later that week with their agreement. This was duly given.

There were no questions or comments.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Phil Scarlett suggested that the Board meet at the RLQ premises occasionally as it would be good to be seen to using the site. This was agreed.

Derek White enquired as to the signage he had seen at the premises opposite the old post office on Wide Bargate which was displaying a "Lincoln College" sign. Paul Collins clarified that Lincoln College had taken over the ISIS training premises some time ago.

There were no other items raised.

7. DIARY DATES

- CPD/Planning Session scheduled for 7 March 2014 – packs for this event were distributed at today's Board meeting.
- Corporation Meeting scheduled for 14 May 2014 – Kathy Wood gave her apologies for non-attendance at this meeting.

