

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOSTON COLLEGE CORPORATION HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2013

1. PRESENT

Mr P Cropley (chair), Mr M Gallagher, Mr T Lascelles, Ms I Lebedowicz, Mr S McCracken, Mrs A Mosek, Mr A Reynolds, Mrs S Richards, Mr P Scarlett, Mr B Walder and Mr D White

Meeting attendance 83%.

Also in attendance: Mrs J Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Mrs F Grady (Vice Principal: Curriculum and 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 Mr D Hanson, Mr J Woodward and Mrs H Wright.

2. TOUR OF THE NEW ACCOMMODATION

Members of the Corporation took a tour of the areas of the Teaching and Learning Hub, Art and Design facilities, Library and Enterprise Zone.

3. APPOINTMENTS

Members were advised of the outcomes of the election processes for staff and student governors. Nominations for the appointment of staff governors, Orla McMahon and Mandla Ndhlovu, and student governors, Nathan Ball and Chaz Simpson, were accepted. It was agreed that the students should be appointed for a 1 year period and staff for a 4 year period.

Nathan Ball, Orla McMahon, Mandla Ndhlovu and Chaz Simpson joined the meeting.

The new members were welcomed to the meeting.

Members were advised that Kathy Wood, who was in attendance, had been appointed as an external advisor to the board. Her role was explained and she gave a resume of her background and experience.

4. SAFEGUARDING

Members received a presentation on safeguarding from the Head of Learner Services which was an update to the mandatory training previously undertaken.

The duty for safeguarding was explained including the requirement to act on any concerns and act as a gatekeeper to follow up welfare concerns. The college has to have constant vigilance about who is on site, to teach learners how to protect themselves and provide regular training to staff. There is a requirement to share information to ensure safety and to work closely with local area designated officers. Members were advised that they were welcome to attend the fuller safeguarding training offered to staff if they wished.

5. MEMBERSHIP

It was reported that Ladey Adey has resigned her membership and the Corporation now has 2 vacancies.

Members were advised that Steve McCracken's membership term was reaching an end and that the Search Committee had a recommendation to make regarding this.

Steve McCracken withdrew from the meeting whilst this matter was considered.

The Clerk advised that the view of the Search Committee was that Steve McCracken should be reappointed for a further four year term following the end of the current term for a number of reasons:

- He is one of the most significant contributors to the work of the corporation, not afraid to express views and ask uncomfortable questions. One of the members who brings most effective challenge to the role.
- He clearly understands the College's business and its context
- His HE experience is valuable
- He has been a very strong chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee and agreed to stay on F&GP to train successor
- He gave very helpful feedback on curriculum links which led to changes in future arrangements
- He has a very good attendance record
- He has agreed to be part of SAR validation process

The Search Committee was aware that two of the most senior governors were expected to be leaving in the near future and felt that reappointment of Steve McCracken would provide balance.

Other members endorsed these views and it was agreed to accept the committee's recommendation.

Steve McCracken rejoined the meeting and was advised of his reappointment.

Members were advised that there were a number of committee vacancies which needed to be filled and consideration was given to the identified vacancies. It was agreed that the following committee appointments should be made:

Audit Committee – Mandla Ndhlovu

Finance and General Purposes Committee – Phil Scarlett and Chaz Simpson

Standards Committee – Nathan Ball, Orla McMahon, Mandla Ndhlovu, and Chaz Simpson

Search and Governance Committee – Bob Walder, Adrian Reynolds and Mick Gallagher

It was also agreed that Siobhan Richards should become the Safeguarding and Equality and Diversity Link governor.

6. MINUTES

a) Meeting of the Corporation 10 July 2013

The Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 10 July 2013 having been circulated were agreed and signed as a correct record.

The following were noted:

- 1) The latest position regarding a data breach was confirmed

Iwona left the meeting at this point

- 2) Governors were invited to Self Assessment validation panels
- 3) A recommendation for a national pay award has been approved at 0.7% with a minimum of £250 for lower paid staff. The College will review finances as the year goes on to determine its ability to fund a pay award.
- 4) Shared services options will be investigated to determine whether cost efficiencies can be achieved. There is a view that the leading organisation gets most benefit from these arrangements
- 5) The coffee shop in Spalding has now opened.
- 6) Negotiations about potential overdraft arrangements will take place towards the end of the year once 2012-13 accounts are complete.

b) Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee – 26 June 2013

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 26 June 2013 were received.

c) Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee – 23 Sept 2013

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 23 September 2013 were received.

d) Meeting of the Standards Committee – 18 September 2013

The minutes of the Standards Committee dated 19 September 2013 were received.

Amanda Mosek gave feedback on the meeting and pointed out that the style of the minutes had been changed so that they clearly show challenges. She briefed members on the A Level results and things being done to improve them. Steve McCracken queried what had happened about the application of higher entry criteria for A/AS levels and Fiona Grady confirmed that the agreed entry criteria had been rigorously applied.

Adrian Reynolds queried whether the style of the minutes needed to apply to all committees and Kathy Wood advised that it should do. Adrian asked that Kathy review Audit Committee minutes for last year and give feedback on them to him as Chairman.

Phil Scarlett pointed out that this was very similar to his experience on the hospital board and that minutes should reflect that everyone who attended contributed. This raised a question about the position of the Clerk in a dual role needing to contribute to and take minutes of the meeting.

Steve McCracken queried whether there should be more of a commentary and a change from third party.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & LEARNING STRATEGY

Members received a report from the Principal containing the new Community Engagement and Learning Strategy which is a new requirement for colleges.

Steve McCracken stated that he was unaware that the College has volunteers supporting learners. Amanda Mosek advised that this has been informal in the past but that the College is proposing to encourage it in the future.

Bob Walder queried whether a reference to developing new learning opportunities each year meant that the College are proposing to change its curriculum offer every year. Fiona Grady advised that the College has to be responsive to community feedback and this may lead to changes in provision. ●

Steve McCracken asked how the impact of the strategy would be evaluated. Members were advised that ways of consulting with the community would have to be further developed and an Adult Learning newsletter may be part of this. ●

Derek White asked for more information about local groups and organisations' use of College facilities. Amanda Mosek advised that the College already provided facilities and intended to promote further, sometimes free of charge.

8. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on progress against the action plan.

Copies of data which would be reviewed by Ofsted were given to members. Special attention was drawn to the 19+ long course data for Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies which showed a 17% fall in success rates from 2011-12 and Science and Mathematics which showed a 12% fall. It was pointed out that the sector subject areas did not entirely match the College's departments.

For Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Fiona Grady advised that half of the deterioration related to one group for whom the course was wrong. Funding had been withdrawn for courses students had really wanted and many withdrew from alternatives offered to them. The appropriate qualifications are now funded again.

Peter Cropley asked what the enrolment numbers were like for this provision in the current year as they appeared to be declining. Fiona Grady advised that they were probably around the same as 2011-12 as the courses the College can offer and fees required have changed and had considerable impact. ●

Steve McCracken asked about the impact of the introduction of 24+ loans. Fiona Grady reported that it was mixed. Access enrolments have gone up and this was probably influenced by the fact that students progressing into higher education would not have to repay the loans. In contrast an engineering course could cost £3,000 and the learner was likely to have to pay it back. ●

Adrian Reynolds queried whether there is any reputational issue in the problems experienced with the engineering course and was advised that there could be but the changes in the course had been explained to all students at the outset. ●

Steve McCracken queried why the College's engineering market is soft but it is proving hugely popular in Higher Education. It was advised that the College's 16-18 numbers are growing in this area. ●

Peter Cropley asked why Arts, Media and Publishing have increased so much and was advised that a partner has a large amount of provision in this area. This work has nationwide enrolment and has not been so badly affected by fee increases as other areas.

Bob Walder pointed out that there were lots of positives in the report and that, although there is more work to be done, the College has had some successes.

One key action from last year was improving adult success rates. Keeping adults in College is a big challenge as they are likely to succeed if retained. Chaz Simpson advised that the Access course was getting a very positive response from adult learners and although some had left this was often more to do with their personal lives than with the course.

It was noted that final achievement data would be available the following week.

9. **PRINCIPAL'S**

Members received a report from the Principal on strategic matters and College and learner news.

a) Strategic updates

It was reported that the reform of vocational education changes to delivery of Maths and English were having a big impact on the work of the College as was the change to study programmes for 16-18 year old learners.

Bob Walder suggested that members could usefully debate the implications for College over coming years. Resources are needed to deliver services to learners and, given budget constraints, how can resources be found to fund future changes. Amanda Mosek advised that this was likely to form part of the strategic planning day. The expectation of a general election in the not too distant future could impact on planning but at the present time delivery of so much more Maths and English is proving to be a particular challenge. ●

Steve McCracken asked about the impact the College might expect from the bursary scheme and incentive to convert to teaching but members were advised that these arrangements only applied to full time teacher training at universities. He also asked for and members were given an explanation of what was meant by high value qualifications.

Adrian Reynolds left the meeting at this point

A discussion took place about changes to inspection and Orla McMahon asked how the impact of work preparing for the next inspection would be assessed. Members were advised that everything has to have demonstrable impact on learners and that the key issues being addressed were identifying impact and how it is measured. This will include the impact of governance. ●

With regard to the Local Enterprise Partnership, members were advised that colleges still had no place on the LEP board. The Chair of Employment and

Skills Board is on the LEP and the LEP considers that this is adequate representation.

Information was also provided on the Review of Further Education and Sixth Form College Governance and a recent Ofsted report on careers guidance.

b) News

The report outlined a number of recent events and activities including an Ofsted monitoring visit, English Language Development Strategy, latest key performance indicators and the outcomes of governor review meetings.

A discussion took place about English language support and the introduction of the English Laboratory. It was noted that Ofsted is taking a keen interest in language development. Chaz Simpson advised that the Access course learners are primarily Eastern European and asked how learners know about the support being offered. Amanda Mosek advised that it was being advertised more now and that referrals from feedback on assignments include information on the availability of the English Laboratory.

The governor review process was noted to have been very useful. Amanda Mosek had put a report to the senior leadership team and identified changes which had arisen as a result of the reviews. I

10. IMPACT OF LEARNER INVOLVEMENT 2012-13

The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality gave a verbal report on the impact of learner involvement in 2012-13.

The impetus had been to have meaningful dialogue with learners. The learner feedback had provided useful information on what learners wanted from teaching and learning.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

The Director of Workforce Development provided a report including key workforce data for 2012-13.

Members noted that the staff turnover chart was very encouraging as was the data on sickness absence. An increase in activity on capability was noted. It was also noted that the College had decided to register for the Sunday Times Best Companies list.

Siobhan Richards commented on the challenges being faced in recruitment and asked if there were any local or sector comparators we could use to aid recruitment. It was suggested that if there were these could be added to the report and that employee relations data could be reviewed year on year too. Siobhan expressed concern about an increase in accidents being reported and it was advised that changed reporting processes had changed the comparators. A discussion took place about the reporting of near misses which it was felt could be helpful. ●

Derek White and Steve McCracken queried the disability statistics and it was confirmed that the determination of disability being used was as in the Disability Discrimination Act.

A discussion took place about the low number of disciplinaries. Tony Lascelles pointed out that this could be a good or bad indicator. Mandla Ndhlovu advised that he felt that ●

staff were well managed and that disciplinarys are a genuinely rare occurrence.

Amanda Mosek questioned whether managers are being strong enough. Managers may be competent and very supportive but sometimes be uncomfortable about challenge.

Chaz Simpson advised that there had been some early access course staffing disruption and there had been some complaints about lack of cover. Amanda Mosek explained that there had been some difficulties in getting staff recruited and that there was a difficult balance to be achieved between Ofsted pressure and staff stress. The College was looking at alternative ways of recruiting to alleviate the position including trying to 'grow its own' and offering more teacher training.

Siobhan Richards confirmed that there was a local issue recruiting staff especially where appointments would require relocation. Other governors had had the same experience.

12. FINANCE

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Corporate Services on a number of financial matters.

Members were advised that the audit of the annual accounts had been carried out and the accounts were being finalised for presentation to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Audit Committee prior to submission to the Corporation's December meeting. The accounts showed a historical cost surplus for 2012-13 of £57k subject to final review by the auditors, compared with a budgeted surplus of £159k including a provision of £526k made for a shortfall against the single adult budget and a significant increase in the costs relating to FRS17 compliance.

Members were advised that the first accounts to be produced for 2013-14 would be for September. A query was raised about the arrangement of an overdraft facility which had been discussed previously and it was noted that this was to be arranged by the end of the calendar year.

Information was provided on enrolment numbers for 2013-14 which were promising. It was not possible for information to be provided on the related funding because the software provided by the Skills Funding Agency to calculate this was not yet functioning.

Following a tender process, the Audit Committee and College Management recommended that ICCA Education Training and Skills Ltd should be appointed as the College's internal auditors. This recommendation was agreed by a majority of members with Orla McMahon abstaining.

Members received a report on the College's risk management during 2012-13 and a copy of the latest risk register which was reviewed. It was agreed that cashflow and governance should be added to the risk register. Janet Hemmant advised that the risk register was undergoing a fundamental review by the Risk Management Group and would be reissued once this was complete.

13. PROPERTY

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

The latest position in respect of grant funded works was noted. Nathan Ball advised that students thought that the Peter Paine Performance Centre was brilliant and its facilities were much better than those previously used at the De Montfort campus. Amanda Mosek reported that from her discussions with learners, the happiest were those at the Peter Paine Performance Centre where the classrooms are interactive and inviting for learning. |

Bob Walder commented that the capital projects had gone well despite the challenges of delivering the works around learning commitments. Amanda Mosek said that she was really pleased with latest new building which was good for recruitment.

Members reviewed a draft Property Strategy which had previously been considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. It was noted that the annexes of detailed information on the estate needed to be appended and that requested information on the split of teaching and support space was not yet available.

A suggestion was made by Mick Gallagher that the College might approach local companies to form a consortium to invest in and brand new accommodation. Amanda Mosek confirmed that the College does try to get sponsorship wherever possible.

Siobhan Richards suggested that it might be possible to promote the facilities which may be available in return for sponsorship. It was advised that the College was already effectively going to do this in Spalding where it was proposing to let a unit in return for benefit to the College. Members agreed to adopt the draft strategy. ●

Information was provided on the latest position regarding redundant sites in Skegness and Spalding including details of an offer which had been made to purchase the De Montfort campus. It was agreed that if possible the College should try to get a deal on the site at a set price without conditions by a fixed date. It was agreed that the Finance and General Purposes Committee should have delegated authority to move the proposed sale forward. ●

14. **GOVERNANCE**

Members received a report from the Clerk to the Corporation.

a) Performance Targets

Performance against the Corporation and committee targets for 2012-13 was reported and reviewed. Consideration was given to targets for 2013-14 and the proposals of the Finance and General Purposes and Standards Committees were reviewed. It was agreed that the 2013-14 targets should be:

Corporation

- 75% attendance including development days
- All governors to make at least one curriculum link visit during the year
- Oversight of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- Measurement of the impact governance is having a leadership and management
- All governors to undertake training on Safeguarding and Equality and Diversity

Finance and General Purposes Committee

- 85% attendance
- Monitoring of the College's cashflow position
- Monitoring of the College's performance against Single Adult Budget targets
- Seeking to resolve the Skegness lease position.

Standards Committee

- 85% attendance
- Apprenticeships – to look at the quality of tracking and reporting as well as the outcomes
- Teaching and Learning – to be reviewed at every meeting of the committee and particularly to identify emerging themes
- To review the quality of AS/A2 provision

A discussion took place about the need to raise the awareness of the attendance requirement for members particularly following disappointing performance in 2012-13. It was agreed that minutes should record attendance levels and that the Corporations targets should be shown on each agenda to raise awareness of them.

Mick Gallagher left the meeting at this point

Kathy Wood suggested that members may find it useful to visit other Corporation meetings to see how they operated.

b) Confidential papers

A review of confidential papers issued during 2012-13 was carried out and it was agreed that the following papers should no longer be restricted as confidential:

- Finance and General Purposes, 4 October 2012 – Property
- Finance and General Purposes, 4 October 2012 – Pay Award 12-13
- Corporation, 12 December 2012 – Property
- Corporation, 27 February 2013 – Ofsted
- Corporation, 27 February 2013 – Property
- Corporation, 10 July 2013 – Property

It was agreed that in future confidential papers should be watermarked to reduce the risk of disclosure. ●

c) Decision making

Members considered the arrangements by which Corporation decisions were taken and agreed that these continued to be appropriate.

d) Search Committee

Details were circulated on the outcomes of the Search Committee's consideration of a number of governance issues. Members were asked to reflect on these for consideration at next Corporation meeting although it was agreed that the name of the committee should be changed immediately to the Search and Governance Committee. ●

15. VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Chaz Simpson reported that Higher Education students were experiencing some problems with the system including access and it was agreed that he would liaise with the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality over this.

16. DIARY DATES

It was noted that the next Corporation meeting would take place on Wednesday 11 December 2013 and that a CPD/Planning Session would take place on 6 November 2013.