

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION MEETING HELD ON 14 MAY 2014

1. PRESENT

Mr P Cropley (Chair), Mr N Ball, Mr D Hanson, Ms I Lebedowicz, Mr S McCracken, Ms O McMahon, Mrs A Mosek, Mr P Scarlett, Mr K Smith, Mr B Walder, Mr D White and Mrs H Wright.

Meeting attendance 71%.

Also in attendance: Mrs J Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation/Vice Principal: Corporate Services), 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), Ms F Wrisberg (Data & Funding Manager) (for item 2 only).

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Gallagher, Mr A Reynolds, Ms S Richards, Mr C Simpson and Mr J Woodward.

Minutes were taken by Mrs J Webb (PA to Principal).

Mrs K Wood (Advisor to the Board) was unable to attend.

2. PRESENTATION

The Board had previously asked that they be given a presentation on funding of the College to enable them to better understand some of the complexities.

Fiona Wrisberg gave a presentation on 'A Guide to Boston College Funding' and provided hand-outs for information. She explained the main sources of funding and the criteria behind each one. She informed the Board that the Skills Funding Agency had changed their funding methodology this year and huge problems had been experienced due to the government software not being fully functional. This had resulted, and still results, in inaccuracies with the funding calculation. This is an ongoing issue and has not yet been resolved. All colleges nationally are experiencing the same difficulties. Janet Hemmant confirmed that the Skills Funding Agency have stated that they cannot guarantee that the calculation is 100% correct.

Steve McCracken enquired as to whether the College could make a complaint if it felt that their figure was inaccurate but members were advised that staffing changes at the Agency meant that the College would shortly have no designated contact. It is anticipated that the Skills Funding Agency will in future be run more along the lines of the EFA i.e. rather more remotely from providers.

Peter Cropley asked for and received clarification as to whether the situation impacted on the College's financial position.

Amanda Mosek responded to Orla McMahon's enquiry as to whether there is any effect on the viability of smaller courses being run by the College, and advised that viability would be impaired but the College would not cancel existing provision although future planning might be affected.

Janie Lau continued with the presentation with her section on 'Finance'. She gave an overview of the content and explained the many streams of funding which the College receives. She explained in depth how changes can affect the target figures and how the delay in SFA software needed to produce information which was not available until February had impacted on finances. Janie Lau explained how the funding KPIs are generated each month and showed how these were reflected in the accounts.

Problems are being experienced in the whole of the FE sector and it was noted that 117 out of 244 colleges, including Boston College, made a loss in 2012/13, up from 70 the previous year. Boston College did not perform too badly in relation to other colleges within the local area with an operating deficit of £65K as compared to deficits at Grantham College of £556K and Lincoln College of £610K. New College Stamford had a small surplus of £39K and Grimsby Institute a significantly larger surplus of £1,427K.

Bob Walder enquired whether the College should change the way it budgets in the future especially if it is experiencing more risk of claw-back than it used to. It was explained that when curriculum planning takes place the College tries to plan to deliver the full funding allocation and delivery is then monitored to hit the targets as closely as possible. Janet Hemmant said that the difficulties with the information systems not working correctly and the rules changing have not helped the monitoring process.

Steve McCracken enquired what the overall bottom line is likely to be at year end given that the College is now into May. Janet Hemmant and Janie Lau had both assured the Board that the figure is likely to be less than £100K deficit.

Bob Walder asked if it would be advisable to have a larger cash-in-hand figure bearing in mind the cash position is less predictable than in the past. This could be achieved when the De Montfort site is sold. Janet Hemmant stated that the sale would make the College more secure and would enable a minimum figure to be effected as well as releasing funds towards further development.

3. **MEMBERSHIP**

Members were advised that Kieran Smith had been elected as a staff governor and the Board agreed to confirm his appointment for the remaining period of Mandla Ndhlova's appointment.

Peter Cropley gave feedback from the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 12 May 2014 when an application to join the Board from Jayne Mitchell, who has recently taken up her new post as Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Bishop Grosseteste University, was considered. The Committee felt that she would be a huge asset to the Corporation and recommended her appointment. Members accepted the recommendation for a four year appointment to take effect from the July 2014 meeting.

4. **MINUTES**

a) Meeting of the Corporation 26 February 2014

The Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 26 February 2014 were reviewed and confirmed as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

b) Meeting of the Audit Committee 20 March 2014

The Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 20 March 2014 were received.

c) Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee 23 April 2014

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 23 April 2014 were received.

Steve McCracken gave an overview of the revised format including the new front sheet which indicated items which were agreed and noted. This enables Board members to see at a glance the key outcomes of the meeting. All members agreed that this would be very useful.

d) Meeting of the Standards Committee 23 April 2014

The Minutes of the Standard Committee meeting held on 23 April 2014 were received.

5. REPORTS

a) Principal's Report and Strategic Update

Bob Walder began by giving an update to the Board on progress to date by the Strategic Options Group which had now met twice. The aim of the group was to consider how best the College could secure its long-term future. A meeting has been scheduled for 28 May with Vici Cadwallader-Webb from ICCA to provide independent input into the processes.

Two strategic options papers were circulated at the table for information with a request for comments, input and views which should be sent to the Principal.

Steve McCracken commented that he had met with the College's Marketing Manager recently to gain further background information.

Bob Walder will be producing a paper on the recently produced structure and prospects appraisal document from BIS and he asked that Amanda Mosek circulate this to the Board in due course.

Referring to her report, Amanda Mosek informed the Board that the Government's consultation on apprenticeship funding reform has now finished. She explained the process regarding the apprenticeship system and it was noted that the proposals pose a real risk to the College.

The QAA are currently visiting the College to carry out their review of HE provision. This review is the equivalent of the Ofsted inspection. There is no indication as to their findings at present and the report and recommendations will be received within the next two weeks.

Amanda Mosek referred to the KPI sheet for Quality and Standards which shows one area marked as red with the other data looking very satisfactory. The area of concern refers to two unsatisfactory EV reports, one in Engineering and one in Construction area.

Steve McCracken asked, if the verifiers know what evidence they are looking for and the College has a high degree of management influence over whether what they see is fit for purpose, why there should be an issue with evidence in one of the unsatisfactory reports. Fiona Grady explained that issues can occur when the College

starts a new qualification and people are not sure what the standards are or a change in EV might make a difference. The standard of verification is a concern for the College and sometimes it has been necessary to complain but primarily it is a management issue. She went on to explain the differing levels of sanctions which awarding bodies can apply.

David Hanson asked whether any company could take on an apprentice and if so what the process was. Amanda Mosek gave an overview of the process explaining that currently the College can arrange for an apprentice to be taken on by a company although this is changing and the responsibility will be upon the employer to find their own.

b) Teaching & Learning – Summary of Improvements

Fiona Grady referred to her report which had been compiled following lesson observations and re-observations carried out in November and commented that there is now a more positive picture. The College is now in a position that very few lessons are graded as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' and this is down to a lot of hard work by staff.

David Hanson enquired how embedded were the changes that have been made and Fiona Grady advised that there was a lot of work carried out to ensure standards are being maintained throughout. Further investment, as noted by Bob Walder, may be required to ensure standards are maintained.

Steve McCracken asked that it be noted that thanks were expressed to all of the Quality team, observers and lecturers for their hard work in raising standards in such a short space of time. Peter Cropley asked that this be disseminated to staff via the Bulletin. ●

c) Business Plan Progress

Amanda Mosek presented a report on Business Plan progress. She flagged up one area marked as Amber, "To grow our business whilst maintaining financial stability", and informed the Board that the main areas of concern are delivery of the apprenticeship contract and the ESF project.

d) Employer Engagement Strategy

Paul Collins presented his report on the Employer Engagement Strategy which had been submitted for information. There were no questions and the report was noted as having been received. The final employer engagement strategy will be brought to the Board at a later date. ●

e) Safeguarding

Amanda Mosek presented the report on behalf of Dawn Telford (Head of Learner Services) and reminded members they have to receive a safeguarding report on a regular basis. Bob Walder asked for an explanation of the term 'safeguarding' which Amanda was happy to provide. College staff have to be constantly alert to any safeguarding issues and all undertake training, as have governors, in this area. The purpose of the report was for information only and there were no specific issues flagged up within it.

Kieran Smith asked if safeguarding training could be included in the induction process

of all staff as he was aware of the potential for someone to miss it. The Board felt this was an area of concern and Keith Tharby was asked to look into this. Safeguarding training is routinely provided to staff and governors every three years on a rolling programme.

Orla McMahon flagged up a potential problem of postcode evidenced safeguarding issues, particularly in the postcode PE25 area. Bob Walder asked that this be looked into further and was assured by Amanda Mosek that if there was an identified issue it would have been included in her report to the Board. ●

f) Proposed Strategy for Teachers' Pay

Keith Tharby gave an outline of options the senior leadership team had been looking into, although nothing had been agreed thus far. The team felt that it was a complex issue which needs to be considered carefully and in a timely manner. The report presented was a positional statement showing factors to be considered. The Board agreed that further research should be carried out and recommendations provided to the Board in due course. ●

g) Funding and Finance

Steve McCracken had met with Janet Hemmant and Janie Lau prior to the last Finance & General Purposes Committee and gave feedback from that pre-meeting, which had been a useful and worthwhile exercise, and from the Committee meeting. Steve McCracken advised that there would be updates on the actions identified in relation to the accounts between now and the end of the academic year. The Committee had looked at reporting financial information in different ways, e.g. geographical location, however the complexities of reporting in this way could be very onerous and time consuming and the Finance and General Purposes Committee had agreed that the information provided would remain in its current format. In the future if site based data needs to be presented for further analysis this can be accommodated.

Steve McCracken reported that the Committee had looked in depth at a number of issues as well as the detail of the accounts.

Referring to the Funding KPIs and allocations for 2014/15, Janet Hemmant identified three significant points of note: 16-18 Apprenticeships will definitely not hit the 2013/14 target, funding allocations for the coming year will put the College through a challenging budget-setting exercise and the implications of changing funding arrangements for the EFA allocations.

Members were advised that Risk Management processes were still running well.

h) Property

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

Janet Hemmant advised the Board of progress relating to the sale of De Montfort site which is moving ahead. Savilles are working with the proposed purchaser and legal arrangements are progressing satisfactorily.

Paul Collins gave an update on recent developments regarding the Skegness property

and advised the Board that the College was looking at pulling all the factors together to produce a 'package' that is economically viable. ●

With regard to the piece of land at the Grammar School, it appears that this matter has gone into abeyance at present due to the change of leadership at the School. It will be pursued again at an appropriate time. ●

i) Governance

Janet Hemmant presented her paper on Governance and advised the Board note the findings from the effectiveness of key governor roles contained within.

The proposed schedule of dates for the forthcoming year's meetings was reviewed and agreed.

j) AoC Governance Conference

Peter Cropley gave feedback following his attendance at a recent AoC Governance Conference he had attended. He said he had found the conference to be informative, interesting and energising. He gave a short synopsis on each speaker's area of expertise and resulting discussions which were held.

Peter Cropley referred particularly to the Data Dashboard and explained how it would work and why it had been introduced, i.e. to enable Governors to access information about their own College and comparable information in relation to other Colleges.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members were advised that the Data Dashboard, which enables governors to assess a high-level summary of performance data for individual colleges to generate questions about the quality and impact of their own provision was now available. It was noted the Data Dashboard does not provide financial data. Each member was provided with a card providing link information for the dashboard.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next full Corporation meeting is Wednesday, 9 July 2014 and the meeting will be held at Rochford Campus.