

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 11 DECEMBER 2013**

1. PRESENT

Mr P Cropley (chair), Mr N Ball, Mr M Gallagher, Mr D Hanson, Mr T Lascelles, Ms I Lebedowicz, Mr S McCracken, Ms O McMahon, Mrs A Mosek, Mr M Ndhlovu, Mr A Reynolds, Mr P Scarlett, Mr C Simpson, Mr B Walder, Mr D White, Mr J Woodward and Mrs H Wright.

Meeting attendance 94%

Also in attendance: Mrs J Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Mr P Collins (Director of Business Development), 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 Mrs S Richards.

2. EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

George Bell gave a presentation on the College's work with employers. He reported that outcomes from employer events earlier in the term had included follow up visits and the development of new links. The College is keen to collaborate with employers and the key to this is identified as being managing sales campaigns and working on customer liaison. A range of ways of working with employers were identified including the delivery of apprenticeships, employer events, commercial work and sponsorship agreements.

Kathy Wood raised a question about the readiness for employment of learners on apprenticeships. George Bell explained how the College had approached this and Fiona Grady also explained how the College engaged with employers as partners in the delivery of apprenticeships. Kathy Wood pointed out that the national apprenticeship service had identified issues with CVs and that support was available from the apprenticeship service. It was agreed that a link to this support should be provided to Fiona Grady. ●

Members identified that both governors and networking event attendees could usefully be provided with the newsletter produced by the employer engagement team and it was agreed that copies of these would be sent out. ●

Helen Wright queried whether there were capacity issues arising from having a small team responsible for work with employers. Amanda Mosek advised that a lot of the work is addressed through curriculum teams and not exclusively through the Business Development team.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Amanda Mosek advised members on the latest position regarding the attempts to recruit new members with education experience. Four potential new members had been identified and work was proceeding to produce a short list for consideration by the Search and Governance Committee.

4. MINUTES

a) Meeting of the Corporation 16 October 2013

The Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 16 October 2013 having been circulated were agreed and signed as a correct record.

It was agreed that in future once draft minutes had been approved by the Chairman they should be emailed to members of the Corporation. ●

Kathy Wood was in the process of reviewing the Audit Committee minutes and would be providing feedback on these. Amanda Mosek and Adrian Reynolds would receive this feedback.

Steve McCracken asked for feedback on the last meeting of the Corporation.

Kathy Wood reported that she was pleased with the way that her role as advisor had been accepted wholeheartedly by members of the Corporation and how members had reported positively on the feedback she had provided. She felt that the Corporation was a cohesive team and that there was evidence that it was providing challenge. Members need to keep in mind the fact that Ofsted wants to see positive actions being taken. Members also need to consider how the work of the Corporation has developed and whether there is anything further which needs development.

Amanda Mosek reported that evaluation of the Chair of the Corporation and Chairs of Committees would be taking place early in 2014. Kathy Wood would be dealing with the feedback on evaluation of the Chair. ●

Bob Walder raised a query about when members could expect to look at the College's strategic development and Amanda Mosek advised that this was to be part of the March development session. Peter Cropley, Bob Walder and Amanda Mosek will meet prior to this session to discuss the content.

b) Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee – 18 November 2013

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 18 November 2013 were received.

c) Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee – 6 November 2013

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 6 November 2013 were received.

d) Meeting of the Standards Committee – 18 November 2013

The minutes of the Standards Committee held on 18 November 2013 were received.

Helen Wright reported that following new appointments there had been a larger membership at this meeting. The minutes of the meeting evidenced increased challenge which was taking place. Nathan Ball and Chaz Simpson reported that as student governors they had found the Standards Committee meeting interesting and useful and that the work of this committee was more easily accessible to them than the work of the main Corporation.

e) Meeting of the Audit Committee – 27 June 2013

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 27 June 2013 were received. It was noted that the committee had also had a meeting in November 2013 for which the minutes will be circulated later.

f) Meeting of the Search Committee – 7 October 2013

The minutes of the Search Committee held on 7 October 2013 were received.

5. 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 strategic update focussed on the changes being made in work based learning and the key role to be played by employers. The intention is that the Local Enterprise Partnerships and employers are going to be more involved in determining training being provided. The Lincolnshire principals have still not had any success in getting representation on the LEP board despite the fact that such an appointment would aid the LEP's understanding of national skills policy. The LEP's view is that skills and training is represented through the Employment and Skills Board. A particular concern was that the Lincolnshire LEP did not appreciate that it had involvement in the determination of capital funding and had not initially put anything about this in its plan. Steve McCracken expressed concern that the government view is that employers can handle the different funding streams despite the predominance of SME's. Amanda Mosek advised that it has been said that consultation will take place about different arrangements for small and micro businesses.

Kathy Wood queried the link between the Skills Funding Agency and the Local Enterprise Partnership and it was noted that this was through the Employment and Skills Board. It was further noted that Amanda Mosek has been invited to attend a meeting of the steering group of the Employment & Skills Board.

Adrian Reynolds commented that it would be interesting to see how many visits to employers were being achieved since there was some concern that apprenticeships were weak.

Amanda Mosek drew attention to the key performance indicators and in particular to the lesson observations where good or better lessons were standing at 62% against a target of 70%.

Bob Walder raised a query about the data breach which had taken place and it was confirmed that data penetration testing was planned to take place on a regular basis in the future. Adrian Reynolds confirmed that the Audit Committee had reviewed the circumstances and responses to the data breach and has found the external input very valuable. The Audit Committee is satisfied with the current position.

6. BUSINESS PLAN PERFORMANCE

Members received a report from the Principal on performance against the College's business plan which the members needed to review to satisfy themselves on progress being made.

Kathy Wood asked whether teaching, learning and assessment was an agenda item at

all curriculum team meetings. Fiona Grady explained that teams have course review systems in place which focus almost entirely on teaching and learning. The agenda for these meetings are not currently prescriptive but Kathy Wood suggested that teaching and learning should appear on all agendas. Mandla Ndhlovu confirmed that whilst it was not an agenda item on all meetings it was regularly discussed. It was agreed that it could usefully be added to the agendas so that it was evidenced. Fiona Grady suggested that a review took place on the further standardisation of the agendas. Kathy Wood suggested that progress reviews and target setting should also be clearly identified.

Members were satisfied with the business plan and progress reported.

7. SELF ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Standards presented a summary of the College's Self Assessment process 2012-13. She explained the process which had been followed and in which many members had participated. There is a need to demonstrate movement between January 2013 and July 2013. A number of key points within the outcomes were identified including that the catering grade had dropped due to outcome issues. This area had been affected badly by apprenticeship outcomes after the closure of the restaurant in Spalding.

Fiona Grady went through the overall College judgements and how they were arrived at. A huge push was being made to improve leadership and management performance and the key strengths and weaknesses were reviewed. A couple of the weaknesses reflected the fact that the College had not been able to demonstrate sufficient improvement by the end of July.

Steve McCracken asked whether the level of improvement required is achievable in respect of lesson observations. Fiona Grady identified that there was a target of 70% good or better and that a lot of targeted work was being carried out so the College should be able to move on on this grade. Bob Walder asked whether it was possible to tell exactly where we are on the scale and Fiona Grady advised that practical sessions tended to be good but that theory in practical areas was not very strong. A range of initiatives were in place to accelerate improvement and her estimate was that half of the assessed grade 3's could be changed relatively easily.

Amanda Mosek advised that mid-year the Self-Assessment would be redone with a specific look at learner progress. The key issue holding back the leadership and management grade is the need to make impact on teaching and learning. Derek White queried how many programme areas needed to move up for this to be regarded as good. Amanda Mosek advised that consistency was the key and that the College needed not to have any Grade 4's.

Orla McMahon queried the fact that the A-Level grade was a 3 and some improvements had been made but the grade had gone down. Fiona Grady advised that this grade consisted of A-Level, Science and some GCSEs which affected the overall grade and also that the initial grade may have been a little generous.

Mick Gallagher advised that he would like to have seen the data in advance so that meaningful dialogue would be facilitated. He queried whether the College would be taking advantage of good areas to bring about improvement across the board and felt that there was a need to know more about why some areas were doing well and others not so well. Fiona Grady advised that the full report had only been completed in the preceding week and a discussion took place about whether it would be useful to look at the full report later. Amanda Mosek felt that it was useful to look at the headlines but

that the full self-assessment report could be sent to members. She pointed out that changes in curriculum management had been designed to allow the sharing of good practice.

Chaz Simpson commented that a conversation had taken place about the publicising of the language lab facility and wanted to report back that learners were using it and it was helping with their grades. He felt that what the College was doing was working and that this was an example of good practice which could be shared.

A discussion took place about whether a separate meeting was required to look solely at this where there could be sufficient time to look properly at information. Fiona Grady advised that for the following year achievement data would be required earlier so it may be possible for the self-assessment to be completed earlier.

Tony Lascelles queried how confident the College is that the grades can be turned round. Amanda Mosek advised that although the College had a very detailed quality improvement plan in place it was not going to be easy and there was a lot of pressure on staff and some staffing problems. Fiona Grady advised that some areas had already moved on.

In response to the query about looking at the information in more detail, Helen Wright suggested that the Standards meeting for January 2014 should be extended and opened up to other members of the Corporation.

Kathy Wood felt that governors were undertaking exactly the right role in reviewing this information and asked how governance improvements were covered. Fiona Grady advised that the full report did give details of ongoing developments. Kathy Wood felt that for the future members might want to consider the frequency of meetings and possibly to consider other models of governance since some boards met more frequently than the Boston College board. Bob Walder expressed a view that monthly meetings could be quite an issue and that it was necessary to find the right model for Boston College. He advised that the SAR review meetings had allowed him to get an understanding of the volume of information going into the self-assessment. Mick Gallagher suggested that whilst monthly meetings might be difficult possibly adding a couple of additional meetings into the cycle might help and Peter Cropley suggested that this could be looked at at the next Development Day. He thanked members of the Corporation for the work that they had done in supporting the self-assessment process. Helen Wright pointed out that Helen Groves had expressed the view that this was the best self-assessment report that she had seen.

8. LEARNER OUTCOMES

The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality presented a report on learner outcomes for 2012-13 and identified the trends within the data. She explained how the data was calculated and identified that there was an improving trend at top level especially with 19+ long courses. There had been a small dip in 2012-13 in Functional Skills but this followed a jump in 2011-12 so was not felt to be an issue. There is an issue with sub-contractor Functional Skills for two or three contractors. The College's Functional Skills results were very good.

Fiona Grady explained that the data needed to be looked at against national averages which still showed that there were some issues to be addressed. Whilst long 19+ outcomes were above average for the first time in recent years there was an issue with Long Level 1 19+ being significantly below average.

Fiona Grady guided members through the comparisons between programme areas

where the most significant issues identified were with AS/A2, GCSE and Science. There were some issues with sub-contractors but these were principally with sub-contractors with whom the College was no longer working.

The apprenticeship data shows outcomes substantially below national averages and this was looked at in some detail. In contrast the employer responsive non-apprenticeship provision was strong.

Fiona Grady advised that there were some Equality and Diversity issues and that the success of the National Design Academy courses created some gaps in performance by gender. There was an ethnicity gap primarily relating to adult ESOL work. Iwona Lebedowicz queried the improvement in Long Level 3 courses and the reasons for it. It was advised that this was in part due to change in curriculum which had addressed the retention issues which had occurred in the past and also the National Design Academy performance had helped with these outcomes. Steve McCracken asked how significant the National Design Academy relationship was. Fiona Grady advised that this was a good relationship and that it was operating on the normal partnership financial model. Adrian Reynolds queried the diligence checks which had been carried out for partners and was advised of the processes which had been followed.

Bob Walder advised that he found this information extremely useful and asked if the College was heading in the right direction. Fiona Grady confirmed that it was but that there was still a lot of work to do on apprenticeships and A Levels and that Long Level 1 provision was receiving attention. Bob Walder queried whether the College needed to review the resources for apprenticeships and asked if it would be useful to have the top issues identified with some narrative explanations of them. It was confirmed that the full self-assessment report addressed this.

Kathy Wood supported the view that resourcing of apprenticeships needed to be carefully considered. Members were advised that curriculum areas had specific responsibility for apprenticeships to address this point.

9. FINANCE

a) Finance Report 2013-14

Members received a report from the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee on the accounts to 30 September which had been reviewed at the committee's last meeting. Steve McCracken reported that the committee had been disappointed with the content of the reporting at this meeting. It had required further information to be provided to members and had identified that there may still be some issues relating to budget phasing since there was some significant deviation from profiling. Members of the committee felt that it was important that they had more information provided on this point.

John Woodward queried how the College budget would be re-profiled. Janet Hemmant advised that re-profiling takes place after performance review meetings. A discussion took place about the quality of the profile information and about its accuracy in some areas of the College's work.

b) Risk Management

Members received a report on Risk Management from the Risk Management group for 2012-13.

c) Annual Accounts 2012-13

Members received a report on the draft annual accounts for 2012-13 from the Vice Principal: Corporate Services. A discussion took place about the volume of information provided and whether all of this information was required in paper form. A number of members felt that presentation of the information in paper form was preferable and Amanda Mosek suggested that it could all be provided electronically with members asking for sections which they required in hard copy.

It was confirmed that the draft accounts had been reviewed in detail by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Audit Committee. A specific issue which had been reviewed was the valuation of the De Montfort campus and it was confirmed that there was no further movement on this point. Adrain Reynolds proposed acceptance of the accounts as drafted including the members report and declarations and the confirmation of the appropriateness of the accounting policies.

The annual report of the Audit Committee was reviewed together with the annual Internal Audit report for 2012-13, the Annual Plan for 2013-14 and the External Audit report all of which were accepted. Adrian Reynolds pointed out that the Annual Plan for internal audit had a changed emphasis to improve the value added contribution of audit and pointed out that although the requirement to have an internal audit contract had become less constrained the College had decided to continue to use this service. It was confirmed that external audit services for 2013-14 would be provided by Baker Tilly.

Bob Walder queried whether the recent reporting included the review of data security relating to the data breach and Adrian Reynolds confirmed that it did.

The letters of representation and the letter of support for the company were outlined to members and it was approved that these should be signed.

Adrian Reynolds recommended acceptance of the draft accounts and statements and members unanimously approved these.

10. PROPERTY

Members received a verbal report from the Vice Principal: Corporate Services on property development. A discussion took place about the Skegness property where it was noted that it was important for the current impasse to be resolved since the auditors would not accept the capital value of the rents being omitted from the accounts for a further year if this was not resolved. Adrian Reynolds explained to members why this cost would have to be treated differently to other rents due to the lack of economic benefit to the College.

Janet Hemmant explained to members that the capital projects with which the College had been involved were now complete.

11. GOVERNANCE

a) Governance Self-Assessment

Amanda Mosek presented a draft self-assessment for 2012-13 and quality

improvement plan for 2013-14 for review. A discussion took place about the different attendance targets for the committees and it was noted that these reflected the size of the committees. Both documents were approved.

b) Performance Targets – Audit Committee

The proposed targets for the Audit Committee for 2013-14 were considered and approved.

c) Search and Governance Committee recommendations

Members received information about the Department for Business Innovation and Skills report on governance and the Search and Governance Committee's views on this report's recommendations. Members accepted the proposals of the Search and Governance Committee. A discussion took place about the benefits for members to join Corporation committees to gain more insight into specific areas of work.

d) Attendance

Members were advised that from 2013-14 onwards the College would have to report on the attendance of individual governors in the annual accounts as a requirement of the Audit and Accountability Annexe to the Foundation Code of Governance.

12. BOSTON FLOODS

The Principal reported to members the impact of the flooding on the College and that an insurance claim was to be made particularly in respect of damage at the Sam Newsom Centre.

13. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Orla McMahon queried whether the papers for the Corporation needed to have more identification of Equality and Diversity issues. This was as a result of discussions at the conference for staff governors and it was agreed that Amanda Mosek should receive feedback on issues arising from the conference

14. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporation would take place on 26 February 2014 and that a CPD/Planning Session would take place on 7 March 2014.