

## Minutes of the FEC Board of Governors Meeting held on Wednesday, 8 December 2010

Present: Steve Lowe (Chair), Kamraan Akhtar, Debbie Brennan, Jayne Clarke, John Hodgkinson, Iftikhar Naweed, Mike Pitt, David Read, Adam Southern, Lewis Wright  
 In attendance: Peter Roberts, Catherine Scott (part) Dee Campbell (minutes)  
 Apologies: Bev Beaumont, Ian Hill, Irene Howard, Cllr Kay Knox, Yvonne Memory, Peter Treadwell, Mick Walsh

*DC minuted the meeting on behalf of KW who was on sick leave.*

		Action
1.	<b>Declaration of Interests</b> None.	
2.	<b>Minutes of the last meeting held on 30 September 2010</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correction to the minutes under item 9 - <i>Examination Results</i> (p6), DB confirmed that the new GCSE syllabus was introduced <b>this</b> year not next year.</li> <li>• The rest of the minutes were agreed.</li> </ul>	
3.	<b>Matters arising</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Oxford work is ongoing. This is a 5 year study. When the report is published JC will bring it to the meeting.</li> <li>• Terrorism insurance will be discussed at Finance Committee.</li> <li>• As a memorial to Gloria, a <i>Gloria Oates Prize</i> will be introduced at next week's Celebration Evening, presented by her daughters.</li> <li>• <i>A Memorial for Gloria</i> to be put on the agenda for the next Governors' meeting.</li> <li>• JH requested that all papers tabled at committee meetings be posted out to absent Governors, including amended copies of the Cycle of Meetings.</li> <li>• SL said that it was important to try to avoid rearranging meeting dates where possible as Governors had very busy diaries.</li> </ul>	<p>JC</p> <p>BB</p> <p>KW</p> <p>KW</p>
4.	<b>Search Committee</b> ( <i>Minutes of 15 November attached</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catherine Scott (CS) had been into College and had a tour of the building, followed by lunch with SL, JC and KW. SL said that CS had been recommended by MP; she had personnel expertise, was a former teacher and had a wealth of business experience. She had been invited to join the meeting tonight at 4.45pm as an observer. SL said he would like to seek Board approval, subject to satisfactory CRB disclosure, to appoint her to the Board of Governors. <i>This was agreed.</i></li> <li>• SL said that the Search Committee had struggled to fill vacancies but now a few good candidates had expressed interest in joining the Board. There were vacancies for two Independent Governors and one Parent Governor. The people who had been approached or expressed an interest were:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ David Benstead, HR Director of Diodes and Chair of Oldham Business Leaders' Group</li> <li>○ Howard Dixon of JSWS Building Company, with a Science influence in Oldham</li> <li>○ Colin Smith (former Chief Executive of the Local Authority)</li> <li>○ Rod Clough (ex-Chair of Governors).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Board was also looking for a person from within the Asian community and had been approached by a person from Positive Steps who currently sits on TOC Board. However, it was agreed that the Board didn't want to poach a governor from a partner college.</li> </ul> <p><i>CS joined the group at this point and SL introduced her to the committee.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IN suggested we look for someone from within the Asian community after the summer 2011 break. SL to speak to KW about this.</li> <li>• After consideration of the options and skill sets of those interested in joining the Board, it was agreed to invite David Benstead and Howard Dixon into college in January for an informal chat and tour of the buildings.</li> </ul>	<p>SL/KW</p> <p>SL/KW</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SL requested an amendment to the Search Committee minutes. It was <b>not</b> the shared understanding of the committee that Rod Clough be invited to rejoin the Board.</li> <li>• SL to speak to RC and CS following the meeting with DB and HD.</li> </ul>	KW
<p>5. <b>Correspondence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSIS are running the 2011 Annual Governance Conference in Birmingham. If any Governor would like to attend please contact SL.</li> </ul>	SL
<p>6. <b>Chairman's business</b> None.</p>	
<p>7. <b>Clerk's business</b> In KW's absence it was agreed to leave the Clerk's business until the next meeting.</p>	
<p>8. <b>Principal's business</b> <u>Principal's Report (tabled)</u> <i>JC gave an update on the key performance indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having introduced these as part of the three-year development plan, it was an audit recommendation to report against the performance indicators.</li> <li>• The table on the penultimate page gave the majority of information about the College's performance.</li> <li>• Success rates are the key area we need to work on – there had been a slight dip in comparison to the last two years. Details on how we will address this are given in the Self Assessment Report and accompanying Capacity to Improve Plan.</li> <li>• JC would give an update on relevant performance indicators as we get them and a detailed report would be given once per year.</li> </ul> <p><i>JC also gave an update on the College's situation during the last week's snowfall:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuesday – started late and finished early.</li> <li>• Wednesday – planned to start late but then the snow came down heavy and the college had to close.</li> <li>• Thursday – stayed closed, because of further heavy snow forecast.</li> <li>• Friday – opened all day and everything had been normal since.</li> <li>• Communication was mainly done via twitter, text, the website, or by phone.</li> <li>• SMT had been looking at putting some timetable time back in. PRS did a huge consultation with HOMAs to see how we should run for the rest of the term. Departments felt confident they could catch up without putting in additional hours.</li> <li>• Most students did well getting into college when it was open.</li> <li>• Staff have been really good, particularly the Premises team, gritting and clearing areas around the college buildings and car parks.</li> <li>• KA said that tutors had given out work in preparation because snow had been forecast. Tutors could set work for students via email.</li> </ul> <p><u>Comprehensive Spending Review</u> JC gave a pp presentation on what we knew about the review and its implications. The presentation had been given to all staff at the Friday briefing. JC highlighted key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where we are is really positive – enrolled 2274 students (4 above target).</li> <li>• We already knew we would have to focus on success rates, achievement and retention.</li> <li>• We knew we would face some funding cuts – the JU budget was cut along with core funding from the YPLA (the details of the latter cuts are not yet known).</li> <li>• We have had four different funding bodies in the space of 12 months: LSC then LA then YPLA and soon EFA (Education Funding Agency).</li> <li>• There were national uncertainties about the pay award. The college had put the pay award in place but the national negotiations were still ongoing.</li> </ul>	All

- The Science Centre was going ahead as planned.
- Spending review – 16-18 reduction in the unit cost of funding but we haven't had any details surrounding this yet.
- There would be big cuts to school sixth form funding reducing down to sixth form college funding level over a number of years.
- A new approach to funding – future funding would be determined by the students we enrol this year for next year.
- Reaffirmed the commitment to raise the participation age to 18.
- The college will be looking to grow more – up to 80 more students over the next 5 years with the additional space in the Science Centre currently planned, but could be higher. This is a prudent estimate.
- JC explained the formula for funding and how it was calculated.
- JH asked how achievement was measured? JC explained that it was not based on high grades for this formula, just pass rates.
- SL said that the benefit to the college was that some school sector sixth forms might have to close when funding is reduced.
- There could be a cap on the SLN ratio and the funding rate may be cut. Additional learning support and other grant funding sits outside of this.
- Another impact is the removal of EMA. 60% of our students receive EMA and we don't have details of the successor scheme but the Government are looking to make £500 million pounds of savings overall, when the cost of the new scheme is compared to the old.

*Related issues:*

- VAT increases to 20% in January 2011.
- Several things came out of the White Paper which would impact on us.
- The 14-19 Vocational Education Review is happening at present and will be published in March. What happens in schools will impact on us.
- The English Baccalaureate will involve calculating the percentage of students who achieve Maths, English, Science, Humanities (History or Geography) and a Modern or Ancient Foreign Language. The percentage of students doing the Baccalaureate will be another performance indicator. A lot of schools would struggle to deliver the Baccalaureate and it would take out the vocational element of the performance tables.
- We are approaching the challenges from a position of greater strength than most.
- Our raw and value added performance is really strong and we have strong partnerships.
- Having the Science Centre puts us in a strong position and we will be improving the rest of the estate.
- Most schools are not now benefitting from BSF which may mean greater demand from the Science Centre.
- Our financial position is strong.
- Our two main priorities are to continue what we are doing, achieving the highest standards possible and to deliver the Science Centre.

*Questions were invited:*

- SL asked if we could see the curriculum changing much? PR said the White Paper might force us to look at some of the things that we offer. Assessment for A levels may change and become less modular.
- We may look at A level programmes to align them more closely to employment if students are less likely to go to university, particularly relating to Science and Business. This is where the links with the business community are important.
- Extended Project AS level has proved very successful in getting students to think and work more independently so the college is looking to widen this.

**9. Committee business**

Audit Committee

PR went through this item:

- The most important business item was the Report and Financial Statement for year ended 31 July 2010, the account summary and the management letter. It looked very positive and the Auditors had given an unqualified audit report with a couple of minor recommendations. *Following discussion the committee recommended the papers to be agreed by the Board.*
- DR picked up on a couple of issues at Finance Committee: Post balance sheet comments need to include the Science Centre. These changes were made after the papers were issued.
- SL and PR agreed this showed the extra rigor and the Committee recommended DR's alterations.
- *It was agreed to make the recommended changes to the accounts with the resolution that the accounts be accepted and SL and JC will sign them off.*
- In terms of audit services, Clement Keyes have changed their name but it is the same people doing the work.
- The internal audit report was very positive. All recommendations have been agreed and implemented. Seven assurance statements were all good.
- IT based work – recommendations are ongoing.
- Internal audit strategy was rolled over from last year.
- Risk register was discussed. The overall key risks were the same although some of the detail had been amended.
- Recommended changes have been made to the Fraud Policy.
- MW has taken over Risk Management from JC.
- The Annual Audit Report (*yellow paper*) is very positive. The Auditors were satisfied that the college was being effectively run and there were good positive working relationships with all parties involved.
- It was agreed to accept these reports.
- The FMCE document was discussed.
- SL thanked PR for reporting on Audit Committee business.

SL/JC

#### Finance & General Purpose Committee

- DR explained that the Finance minutes hadn't been issued yet, due to KW's absence.
- The major item was the Science Centre and its progress.
- The Committee had met with AA Project to discuss their fees.
- The fact that the contract sum was lower than originally anticipated, had impacted on the fees which were based on a % charge. AA Projects had agreed on a fixed fee considerably less than what had been originally quoted. It was agreed that one final payment of £25k would be made at the end of the contract.
- SL said that it showed how the market had changed in terms of the original price quoted for the project and how costs had come down and it had come down to negotiation in the end and overall the college had come out with a good package. Negotiations with AA Projects had been friendly but difficult. They now had to ensure that Bardsleys came in on price.
- JH asked if the problems with the roof had been resolved? JC explained that this was still ongoing. The original roofing contractor had agreed there were problems that needed resolving and were awaiting a report but they were aware that we need the work doing quickly. SL said that it was concerning that a 3 year old roof was leaking.
- Bardsleys won't begin work on the project until the roofing problems have been resolved so we may have to negotiate this to avoid delays.

#### Personnel Committee

JH said that most of the meeting had been taken up with the Annual Staff Statistical Analysis. He had requested that Governors see this report each year. JC to arrange this with LB. JH explained that it was a useful document giving comparisons year on year and highlighted some statistics:

- Under *Recruitment and Selection* the ethnic minority % of staff didn't reflect the % of the student cohort. This was not something we could do a great deal about as the policy of the college is always to recruit the best candidate to the post but we would continue to monitor the situation. SL commented that students who originally studied here were now starting to

JC

want to come back to work at the college.

- 5 out of 8 of the previous cohort who did middle management training were ethnic minority staff. *(Dee to check this with Alison)*
- Under *Gender and Age Profile* these statistics showed a normal distribution but removal of the compulsory retirement age in 2011 may change this.
- Staff absence rates were fairly low with very little change from last year. The Committee had discussed what constituted long term absence. The current definition was over 10 days but it was felt that this was too low compared with other institutions. LB will look at how other institutions define long term absence.
- LB had given an update on the Equality Act 2010. One change was the inability to ask about a candidate's health record prior to them being offered the post but MP said that health records could be asked for once the candidate had been shortlisted.
- There was also a change to maternity pay – terms and conditions of employment were the same after 12 weeks of service.
- Best Companies 2011 Award – after last year's outstanding success the college had now changed its application category to the Best Companies in the Public Sector, which is free to enter. We await the results.

JC/LB

#### Quality Committee

The minutes hadn't been published yet.

PR explained that the college followed a Quality Calendar *(copy tabled)*. The key documents were the Self Assessment Report and Capacity to Improve Plan. These were what the college was guided on. PR went through some of the outcomes of the report:

- There was a dip in our Success Rate.
- On the ALPS report thermometer the college is in the top 25% in terms of how well it performs and our T score puts us in the top 10%.
- English Literature has increased to a '6' following remarks.
- PR compared our report to other outstanding colleges and felt that in terms of performance we were ahead of them.
- Also looked at the LAT report produced by the Government and our report was positive.
- ALIS report is still strong but has dropped from 2009.
- KW had presented the Governors SAR and the committee agreed it was a good reflection of how Governors work. It was suggested that Governors be involved in the production of this report in the future.
- On the Capacity to Improve Plan it was suggested that the Student Governor might want to do a presentation to the Board
- Some improvements to be made to the website. SL said this site has a lot of useful information and encouraged Governors to have a look at it.

SL/KW

*DB left the meeting at this point.*

- PRS tabled the Self Assessment Report and said that this was for discussion at the next meeting so asked members to bring the report with them.
- SL said that he had sat in on some of the self assessment meetings with IHo. It was a very rigorous process, the staff were very self-critical and challenged themselves all the time.
- Terms of reference were discussed and some amendments were made.

DC to  
issue to  
members  
not  
present

## 10. Updates

### Monthly Management Accounts

BBT was on a course so DR went through the accounts briefly:

- There was nothing major to report. The accounts showed the very strong financial position the college was in.
- The key element to look at was the feasibility study for the refurbishment work in college once the Science department moves to the Science Centre. This should be done by January 2011 and the cost could be between £300-500k.
- Finance Committee will be looking closely at whether we should spend cash reserves or

borrow.

- JH asked if the college would still be in a strong position after refurbishments had been completed? DR replied that we couldn't continue to sit on our cash reserves, we had to invest them otherwise we might lose out on future funding. Our financial position would still be strong but not as strong, but the college should recover to a healthy position.

#### Health & Safety

- David Raynor-Taylor, our College Supervisor and H&S Union Representative, will be leaving the College at Christmas and he will be a real loss. Another member will step in his place as well as in a supervisor role.
- Premises audits are taking place at present.
- Everything is going as it should in terms of H&S.

#### Students Association

- The first official Students' Association meeting with tutor group representatives takes place tomorrow.
- PR said as part of student participation he would like the SA's views on what happened in college, particularly about things like enrolment.
- SL spoke about the new Oldham Youth Centre that is opening in town. It will cost £5 million and £1 million will have to be raised each year to cover running costs. Local business people have committed £25k each per year for 3 years. It would be good for the college to become involved.
- College students hadn't been involved in the tuition fee protests on the whole but a few had travelled to Manchester.

#### **11. Any other business**

- JC said that the college was currently restructuring the Equality & Diversity Group. There would be a Steering Group and a Consultation Group. Alison Fairclough had asked whether a Governor might like to join. SL asked that Governors be sent details that they could then respond to.
- SL thanked CS for joining the meeting and she will be a Board member officially from February 2011.

AF

#### **12. Date and time of the next meeting: 16 February 2011 at 4.30pm in Meeting Room 1.**

*CS and PR left the meeting at this point.*

#### **13. Report on the Remuneration Committee**

The two items discussed were deemed to be confidential and recorded separately.

*The meeting closed at 6.16pm*

*Submitted to the Board for approval on 18 January 2011.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Steve Lowe (Chair of Governors)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_