

## MINUTES OF THE FEC BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 1 JULY, 2009

Present: Abdullah Al-Moshin, Phil Brisk, Nick Brown, Ian Hill, John Hodgkinson, Irene Howard, Cllr. Kay Knox, Richard Lee, Steve Lowe, Iftikhar Naweed, Gloria Oates (Chair), David Read, Lily Risby  
In attendance: Bev Beaumont, Jayne Clarke (part), Peter Roberts, Ed Stacey (part), Mick Walsh, Kath Wrigley (Clerk)  
Apologies: Scott Jackson, Mike Pitt, Jackie Scholes, Peter Treadwell  
Absent: Linda Newitt

In opening the meeting the Chair extended a warm welcome to the two new Student Governors. They were both encouraged to take part in the discussion of any topic raised during the meeting and to raise any questions.

- |  | <u>ACTION</u> |
|--|---------------|
| 1. <b><u>Declaration of Interests</u></b><br>None was declared.  |               |
| 2. <b><u>Minutes of the last meeting held on 29 April, 2009</u></b><br>Both the published and Confidential Minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.  |               |
| 3. <b><u>Matters arising</u></b><br>There were no matters arising.   |               |
| 4. <b><u>Clerk's business</u></b><br><b><u>Forms for signature</u></b><br>KW thanked all those who had returned their signed forms promptly. Only one member had not yet returned them and a reminder had been sent to the Governor involved.<br><b><u>Newsletters</u></b><br>Attention was drawn to copies of the latest edition of <i>Forum News</i> , published by the SFCF, and the <i>Governor</i> magazine, both of which were on display and available for collection.  |               |
| 5. <b><u>Correspondence</u></b><br>There was no correspondence.  |               |
| 6. <b><u>Chairman's business</u></b><br>The Chair drew attention to the Cycle of Meetings for the coming academic year which had previously been circulated to Governors. Attention was drawn to the fact that ALL Committee meetings would now commence at 8.30 a.m., for a trial period, in the hope that this would be more convenient for members. This would be reviewed next year if unsuccessful.<br><br><b><u>RESOLVED:</u></b><br><b><i>that</i></b> the Cycle of Meetings 2009-2010 was accepted by the Board.   |               |
| 7. <b><u>Principal's business</u></b><br><b><u>Swine flu</u></b><br>NB reported that the College had just been informed that the son of a member of staff, recently returned from New York, had contracted swine flu. The member of staff concerned had not been into College since the diagnosis was confirmed. Advice had been sought from the local NHS and contingency plans for dealing with a potential pandemic had been rehearsed. NB added that, as the summer break began on Friday, 3 July, there would be no students and few members of staff in College from that date until 20 August. However, should the infection become more widespread, it would be difficult to close the College in the early part of the academic year during enrolment and induction of the new cohort. GO remarked that more cases were likely to be reported and the medical profession had advised against "swine flu parties", which had been advocated in a recent newspaper article. |               |

ES joined the meeting at this point.

GO explained that ES had been invited into the meeting, following his resignation from the Board in April, in order that Governors and College staff could present him with a token of their gratitude for his many years of loyal support and hard work on behalf of the College. ES thanked everyone, adding that his time at the College had been extremely rewarding and he had learned a great deal during his time as a Governor, for which he was indebted to all. The College and its Board were the best exemplar of how an organisation should operate and set the standard for all others.

GO then presented a gift to PB, who was stepping down as a Governor at this meeting. PB had joined the Board as a Parent Governor, was re-elected as an Independent Governor and then, following a change in career, was elected as a Parent Governor last year. In wishing him well for the future, GO added that PB would be returning to the College in August as an English Teacher. PB thanked everyone for their good wishes and echoed the sentiments expressed by ES.

**ES then left the meeting.**

7. **Principal's business (contd)**  
**Science Centre update**  
NB gave an update on the current situation, the Minutes of which were deemed to be Confidential and withheld from publication.  
**Article in Evening Chronicle**  
NB drew attention to an article which had appeared in the local newspaper which indicated that the new Breeze Hill and Counthill schools would be run by Oldham Sixth Form College. This was not the case and the Chronicle had been informed of their error.
8. **Child Protection Policy**  
MW led this item referring to documents which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The following comments were noted:  
**Guidelines on the Protection of Young Adults**
- there had been few amendments to the existing Policy which had been updated primarily to reflect the changeover in responsibility for this issue from Lynn Smith to MW. However, further changes would be introduced in the future;
  - KK remained the nominated Governor for child protection and a meeting had taken place in March 2009 to discuss issues around this Policy, which had proved very useful;
  - child protection and safeguarding were both high priority issues at the moment and newspaper reports of recent cases had given them an even higher profile than before;
  - there would be changes to the Inspection regime which would affect this Policy;
  - all students under the age of 18 were covered by this policy, but it was pointed out that, although most students reached the age of 18 whilst at College, the Policy applied to them until they left;
  - the College maintained a contact with the Vulnerable Adults Unit which had been very supportive and two Year 13 students had been referred to them during the year. However, the Unit could only intervene as a result of direct contact from the young person;
  - training was available specifically for FE College staff and the Policy indicated that named staff at the institution should attend a Refresher Course every two years. For MW and JC this was due in 2010. Both Alison Fairclough and two Student Support Managers would also receive this training, to provide cover in the unlikely event that both MW and JC were out of College at the same time;
  - in addition, training was available for all new staff via on-line Child Protection Training, based on the NSPCC Programme. All staff were advised to undertake this training when they joined the College and, currently, random checks were made to ensure staff were doing so. This would be changing to an automated system next year which would also enable staff to print their own on-line accreditation Certificate once training had been completed;
  - in total, 9 students had been referred to Social Services during the year, the majority informally to the After-Care Team. Official referral forms had been completed for two students where further action had been taken but in all 9 cases students had remained in College and completed their studies. Issues referred included domestic violence and disputes with parents, for which support had been given by the College;
  - there was now a noticeable shift towards *Safeguarding*, in addition to referrals to Social Services, Subjects delivered through Tutorials (particularly before Christmas) had included information on drugs and sexual health awareness and personal safety;
  - under the Ofsted framework all institutions must achieve *Outstanding* in at least one of the limiting factors to qualify for an overall grade. *Safeguarding* would be a limiting factor and the College would actively seek to maintain its already *outstanding* status – which, in turn, emphasised the importance with which these issues were regarded.
- Forced Marriages Policy**
- few changes had been made to the existing guidelines. The designated person in respect of this Policy was MW and JC (in his absence), and other members of staff had also either received appropriate training (including AL, Student Support Manager) or had expressed an interest in doing so (e.g. AF, Assistant Principal);
  - during the year 8 female students had raised concerns about a potential forced marriage but all 8 had remained in College. In each case, concerns were investigated and none of the students was involved in this situation;
  - statistics remained fairly consistent – last year 10 students were affected – despite the growth in the number of students enrolled.
- Discussion followed:
- GO suggested minor amendments to the text which were easily rectified;
  - IHo remarked that both Policies had been reviewed previously by the Board and they remained in-depth, explicit and sensitively written. MW explained that the Tutorials delivered before Christmas had focused on personal safety when socialising;

- IHo added that overall, the Policies were of a high standard, demonstrating wide knowledge of the issues and staff were actively involved in their implementation through induction and training. The way in which each case was processed ensured complete confidentiality for students who were in a particularly vulnerable age group. A vote of confidence was proposed in both Policies.

**RESOLVED:**

**that** the Guidelines on the Protection of Young Adults and Forced Marriages Policy were both adopted by the Board.

9.

**Committee business****Audit Committee**

JH explained that PT had agreed to move from Finance to the Audit Committee, of which he was the newly elected Chair following ES's resignation in April. In his absence JH led this item, referring to documents circulated prior to the meeting. The following comments were noted:

- the second block of Internal Audit Reports, prepared by Clement Keys was discussed in detail, and all three areas reviewed had been given *Substantial assurance*;
- there had been two minor recommendations recorded under the *Health & Safety* audit;
- despite being given *Adequate assurance* for *Campus Management*, Governors were assured that this should give no cause for concern. Five recommendations had been made which had been accepted by management;
- one item which had been discussed at length was the policy on PAT Testing which stated that all small electrical appliances should be tested on an annual basis. In some instances this had not been carried out for a variety of reasons but plans to rectify this were in hand. MW would oversee this process;
- the Risk Management Strategy and Disaster Recovery Plan had been discussed in detail and a number of changes were brought to the attention of the Committee. These included the introduction of a colour-coded "traffic light" system of classification for the various risks; the addition of a pandemic flu checklist and a more detailed analysis of the risks associated with the Capital Project, which was currently considered to be the single, most significant risk for the College. The Board was asked to accept this document. JC added that the "traffic light" system, recently introduced on the recommendation of the Internal Auditors, had been particularly useful in identifying the most serious risks, listed on pp. 8 & 9 of the document. This list, which was repeated in the Financial Forecast, was submitted to the LSC who no longer required sight of the full document.

**RESOLVED:**

**that** the Risk Management Strategy and Disaster Recovery Plan was formally accepted by the Board.

**Quality Committee**

RL presented this Report, referring to papers circulated prior to the meeting. The following comments were noted:

- JC had presented the **Three Year Development Plan** which was more succinct than in previous years and there was no longer any overlap with the Self-Assessment Report. However, some changes were highlighted including SMT's discussion of the College Mission. Members felt that the statement did not truly represent how well the College supported its students and, as a result, a list of four key values was drawn up. **Governors agreed fully with this amendment.** Within the Planning section of the document, the uncertainty in the sector, progress on the Science Centre and Oldham's move towards a University town were highlighted. The Strategic Objectives had not changed, although one addition had been made in response to the *Green Agenda*, promoting sustainability in the College. This section represented an excellent summary of the College's current status and achievements and plans for the future. The document was recommended to the Board;
- at an earlier Board meeting, PR had presented a broad outline of the **Framework for Excellence (FfE)** which was another management system introduced by the LSC with a view to providing additional data on the College for Ofsted, parents and learners. The Summary Sheet which had been circulated illustrated the College's performance using the FfE criteria and it was gratifying to note that in the majority of categories the College's score was *outstanding*. The College had been graded *Good* for Learner Views. Despite an on-line survey attracting 1,400 student responses (the highest ever) the College had achieved less than the 90 points required to be *Outstanding*. However, it was noted that no Sixth Form College had achieved the highest grade, which prompted questions regarding the method used to calibrate results. Although the College achieved maximum score on Value Added, because of its widening participation agenda and non-selective policy, *Outstanding* in terms of Success rates always proved difficult to achieve.

The grade awarded for Resource efficiency mirrored that for Success Rates and the College achieved a *Good* grade in both cases.

PR added that the College could have received an *Outstanding* grade for Success Rates by enrolling only A\* students, but this was contrary to its Mission. As retention and achievement were taken into account when calculating Success Rates the College had been graded *Good* – and although a higher grade would be preferable, this was still an achievement when taking into account the number of students and the range of their abilities;

The fact that 97.59% of students had provided details of their progression to HE or employment had resulted in an *Outstanding* grade for Learner destinations. Few Colleges had been able to obtain this information from their students;

The College's financial performance continued to be *outstanding* and all concerned had worked particularly hard to achieve this.

Discussion followed:

JH queried the status of the FfE document and PR explained that the data submitted should have resulted in a published, overall grade, to inform parental and student choice and commissioning. However, a decision had been taken recently not to publish an overall grade this year. The pilot of the FfE had been undertaken by FE, Sixth Form and Specialist Colleges but next year secondary schools would be asked to take part in a pilot. The future status of the document was unclear given the impending demise of the LSC. Training scheduled for July had been postponed to October and the whole process was currently under review.

In response to JH's comment, PR added that there had been disquiet in the sector about the way in which some grades had been calculated and this was one reason why the overall grade had been withdrawn.

- the Committee was informed that, although Star Chamber (1) would normally take place in October/November after publication of the summer examination results, staff had, this year, been invited to **Star Chamber (2)** meetings where they were invited to *predict* achievement. Overall, staff had been optimistic, particularly for AS grades, following the introduction of various measures to improve on last year's results. **Star Chamber (1)** meetings would be arranged, as usual, after the beginning of the academic year, but paperwork had already been circulated to give staff an opportunity to make an early start if they wished.
- PR commented that the electronic student reviews and focus groups had proved very successful. There had been consistently good feedback, stronger this year than in previous years and students had expressed a high level of satisfaction with their experience in College.
- IHo commended College Managers for their thoroughness in identifying a possible area of weakness in terms of teaching and learning. INSET training had been provided to address this and IHo asked if improvements as a result could be monitored? PR responded that a programme of training was in place and on an annual basis individual Departments identified ways in which performance could be improved. Staff themselves identified "teaching and learning" following responses to the question "*Have you had varied teaching methods this year?*" IHo suggested that students could be asked "*What is the most exciting lesson you have had this year?*"
- SL commented on the high response level from students, with over 4,000 individual responses. PR added that whilst "Safeguarding" was considered to be extremely important by Ofsted, it had been demonstrated that *Learner Views* were equally valuable.

PR

**RESOLVED:**

**that** the Three Year Development Plan was accepted by the Board.

Finance Committee

DR reported on the last meeting of this Committee, referring to documents already circulated. The following comments were noted:

- this year had seen another set of excellent financial accounts;
- in terms of expenditure, the Minutes illustrated the accuracy of predictions and planned expenditure (particularly on staffing) and, where necessary, the inclusion of contingency amounts;
- financial support for the Science Centre had significantly reduced costs incurred by the College for the production of the AiP;
- the impact of the fall in interest rates on investments had been reviewed and steps had been taken to maximise returns based on advice received;
- efficiency savings were made across the College in a variety of ways, as shown in the Minutes;
- the College was actively seeking ways of funding the bus service used by students travelling from Rochdale, as this was no longer supported financially;
- the Board could have confidence in the predictions for the Capital Project as well as the allocation of funding towards the Science Centre and refurbishment of the existing buildings;
- it remained difficult for the College to predict an operating surplus because of the amount of depreciation included in the accounts. However, many Colleges would soon be in the same position following their own building programmes and the reporting system could be changed.

- the papers presented to the Committee were discussed in detail, as recorded in the Minutes of the meeting, and the Committee recommended the Financial Forecast and Budget to the Board.

JC left the meeting at this point.

Discussion followed.

KK remarked that the capital project situation was particularly frustrating for all involved. However, without the drive and enthusiasm of NB and the Principal of The Oldham College, supported by their Governing Bodies, the town would not have had a University Centre. The Science Centre project was supported by the same drive and enthusiasm and there was still hope that it would succeed.

GO added that the Duncan Lawton building would not have been built had the Board not been willing to take certain risks. The Science Centre project had placed the Board in a similar position and Governors should stand fast in their support for all involved in seeking a successful outcome. The College should not have to turn science students away.

JH queried the actual amount spent to reach the AiP stage of the project and details of expenditure to date were provided. NB added that the strength of the Oldham Partnership was that they had always supported this project in a generous and positive manner.

### ***RESOLVED***

**that** the Financial Forecast 2009-2012 and Annual Income & Expenditure Estimates for 2009-2010 were accepted by the Board without amendment.

### ***Personnel Committee***

JH led this item referring to papers circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were noted:

- staff recruitment was on-going and details of the current position with regard to recruitment and retention were presented. Congratulations were recorded to PB on his appointment as an English Tutor at the College;
- the Premature Retirement Policy had been discussed previously by the Committee who had suggested various minor amendments. A revised version was further discussed and the Board would be asked to accept the Policy. KW was asked to send out amended copies to members;
- the Disciplinary & Grievance Policy was revised from time to time in line with changes in legislation and the version reviewed by the Committee had been drawn up in consultation with MP. The Policy would be taken to the LJC meeting the following day prior to its adoption by staff;
- a minor amendment had been made to Part-time Teaching Contracts. The College employed a number of part-time teaching staff depending on the requirements of the curriculum. Those Contracts had been amended to include reference to the Full Time Equivalent in terms of hours worked, to clarify that all staff were required to attend meetings and other College functions within their contracted hours;
- a copy of the more detailed IIP Report had been circulated to Governors. The College's award had been renewed for a further 3 year period. The IIP Assessor had expressed his gratitude to all those interviewed during the process, adding that it had, once again, been a pleasure to work with the College. Particular thanks were due from Governors to Alison Fairclough, who led this process and also to PB who represented the Governing Body in the final assessment.

KW

NB added his thanks to AF for ensuring that staff were alert to the requirements of the Award, continued to question and make improvements.

## 10. **Updates**

### ***Monthly Management Accounts***

BB reported as follows:

- the predicted outturn had changed again since the meeting of the Finance Committee, when the Financial Forecast and Budget had been agreed;
- the most significant impact on the College had been the amount of interest received on investments. In previous years this was in the region of £178,000, and this amount had played a major part in supplementing the funding allocation received from the LSC. Interest this year was expected to be £45,000 from investments. Information had been sought on the best way to maximise interest from investments and in discussion with PT at the NatWest it had been agreed to open another account which could be used for overnight investments;
- the Year End predicted surplus of £37,000 would in fact be £213,000. The increase was due to under-spend of Department budgets and contingency monies received in year.

Health & Safety

MW led this item referring to papers circulated prior to the meeting. The following comments were noted:

- a number of policy documents regarding health and safety had been accessible from various sources - including the Staff N drive, Intranet and Moodle. These had now been collated by Lynn Smith (LS) and all placed on Moodle, where they could be accessed by all staff;
- the over-arching Health & Safety Policy was relatively unchanged. Full responsibility for health and safety had now been passed to MW although LS's experience and expertise was still available to provide support and to oversee College trips and visits;
- IHi remained as the Governor Representative on the Health & Safety Executive, and two new Union representatives had been appointed to the Committee - Richard Nuttall and David Raynor-Taylor;
- in terms of statistics – there had been 60 logged incidences requiring First Aid, of which 19 had been recorded. There was one RIDDOR accident – a broken leg sustained during a football match – and 18 cases involved treatment following illness or injury sustained at home or outside College, out of a College community of around 2,000 staff, students, visitors and Contractors. This was testament to the procedures in place;
- with regard to PAT testing, a copy of the existing Policy had been circulated to illustrate the fact that this was in place. However, this was currently being comprehensively re-written in accordance with advice received and would be taken to SMT and Audit Committee for comments and approval before being presented to Governors in the Autumn;
- the Health & Safety Welfare Policy was in place and required signature by the Chair of Governors and the Principal.

KW

Student Association

AA-M thanked the Board for the warm welcome extended to himself and LR. He hoped that this year's members of the Student Association would be as successful as their predecessors. The Student Association was currently involved in updating videos and photographs to raise awareness of their membership and activities amongst all existing and new students. GO responded that both AA-M and LR had been elected by their peers who obviously had confidence in their abilities, adding that as well as reporting on the work of the Student Association, they were both encouraged to take part in the discussion of all Agenda items, as their views on any topic were valued.

11. **Any other business**

GO reminded Governors that although PB was no longer on the Board, from August he would be seen around College in a different guise – that of English Tutor. Thanks were again expressed to him for his hard work and continued support for the College during his many years as a Governor.

12. **Date and time of next meeting**

The next meeting would take place at 4.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 30 September, 2009 in Meeting Room 1.

13. **Items of confidentiality**

Governors agreed that some of the discussion under *Principal's business* were confidential. These notes would be recorded separately and excluded from the published Minutes.

The meeting closed at 5.55 p.m.

Submitted to Board for approval: 30 September, 2009

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of the Corporation

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