

MINUTES OF THE FEC BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 2 JULY, 2008

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

In the absence of the GO and SL who were both unable to attend, John Hodgkinson was invited to Chair the meeting. A warm welcome was extended to the two new Student Governors, Khadija Begum and Asim Mahmood, who were both encouraged to take part in any of the discussion during the meeting.

1. **Declaration of Interests**

None was declared.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on 30 April, 2008**

Both the published and Confidential Minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

IHo and IN arrived at this point.

3. **Matters arising**

Review of Entry Criteria

PR led this item referring to a paper circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were noted:

- Governors had been asked to consider a review of entry criteria in the light of increasing student recruitment and restricted accommodation in the existing buildings;
- the review of entry criteria had taken into account the College's Mission and its widening participation agenda to ensure that the College remained inclusive;
- the changes would be published in the 2009-2010 Prospectus;
- the first two criteria regarding school record and age on application to the College were consistent with existing requirements;
- the most significant changes referred to GCSE grades in English and Maths. These previously required minimum grades of D and E in English Language and Maths, either way around. This was the same for both Level 2 and Level 3 courses. Research had shown that students achieving less than the minimum D grade in English found it difficult to succeed on Level 2 or 3 courses;
- under the proposed changes, for Level 3 courses, students with a grade E in Maths would be required to have passed English Language at Grade C or above. It was felt that students with grades D and E in English and Maths should study at Level 2 before progressing to Level 3;
- many schools now entered their students for vocational Level 2 courses rather than GCSE courses. Although they had the same equivalence as GCSE courses in terms of QCA points, they did not provide the same preparation for A level study;
- students with at least 3 GCSE B grades would be encouraged to consider studying 4 AS level subjects, provided they also gained the minimum Maths and English grades;
- enrolment to vocational courses required either the same GCSE grade as for AS and A level, **or** a First Diploma (equivalent to 4 GCSEs) plus the minimum grades for English Language and Maths, **or** a first Certificate qualification (equivalent to 2 GCSEs) with 3 GCSE A*-C passes with the minimum English and Maths grades, together with subjects relevant to the course applied for;
- the revised entry requirements contained a new minimum in terms of passes at GCSE, as opposed to any Level 2 course, for students to progress to AS/A Level courses. At the same time Level 2 vocational courses (BTEC First qualifications, Applied GCSE) were included in the qualifications required for progression to the vocational courses offered at the College. These changes did not increase the entry requirements for students applying to the College but were designed to help guide students onto courses suitable for their academic profile. They also provided greater clarity for applicants regarding this.

Discussion followed.

- ES pointed out that the College undertook much remedial work with students enrolling with lower grades and asked if the new criteria would remove the need for this? PR responded that the new entry requirements would impact on approximately 20 students who had not achieved a grade D or above in English and evidence suggested that those students found it difficult to progress. The new criteria would relieve some of the pressure on Tutors;
- it had been noted that of the 54% of students who enrolled on a Level 2 programme only 33% passed if their English grade was no higher than E.

ACTION

- PR confirmed that prior to each student interview there was a case conference with the school's Head of Year and the Connexions Team. School records were scrutinised for all students enrolling from non-partner schools;
- JH asked if the new criteria would apply to all potential applicants and when it would be introduced. PR confirmed that, if agreed by the Board, they would apply to all applicants with effect from 2009 and the entry requirements would be included in the 2009 Prospectus;
- NB added that many students arrived at the College with qualifications that precluded their success at AS and A Levels and expressed the view that there was too little emphasis on Maths and English in Secondary Schools. Students with low grades in both these subjects were disadvantaged in terms of further study;
- PB asked if students arriving with a D in both Maths and English had to re-sit both subjects. In response, NB confirmed that the aim was for them to matriculate in both subjects.

RESOLVED:

that the new Entry Requirements were accepted by the Board.

4. **Correspondence**

The only exchange of correspondence would be discussed under *Chairman's business*.

5. **Chairman's business****Search Committee**

JH had accepted the invitation to join the Search Committee at their last meeting and, in the absence of other members, led this item referring to Minutes which had been circulated to members. The following points were noted:

- correspondence had been exchanged between the Clerk and PB whose term of office ended on 1 September, 2008. PB had expressed concern that changing work commitments might preclude him from attending some lunchtime meetings. The Committee acknowledged the valuable contribution that PB had made as a member of the Board, and as there was a current vacancy for a Parent Governor, the Clerk had asked if he would be willing to serve for a shorter period of two-years in that capacity, rather than commit to a four-year term of office. Subject to his daughter enrolling at the College in September, PB had accepted this invitation;
- IHo was invited to serve as a Co-optee until a suitable vacancy became available and PB's acceptance of the role of Parent Governor created a vacancy for an Independent Member. When contacted by the Clerk, IHo had accepted the nomination to re-join the Board.
- Governors were informed that RL, who had been appointed Assistant Principal since the last Board meeting, had queried whether or not he should continue to serve as the Teaching Staff Governor. The Committee felt that it was appropriate for him to complete his term of office. In the meantime, RL proposed to ask staff for their views.

RESOLVED:

that PB was elected as a Parent Governor for a two-year term of office with effect from 1 September, 2008; and

that IHo was elected as an Independent Governor for a four-year term of office with effect from 1 September 2008, and

that RL would continue to serve as the Teaching Staff Governor, following his promotion to Assistant Principal.

Cycle of Meetings

The Cycle of Meetings for the coming academic year was presented to the Board. Members were asked to put these dates in their diary and inform the Clerk of any dates on which they were unable to attend.

AGM

The date of the AGM had been scheduled for 1 October, to follow the first Board meeting of the year. However, as Eid was 30 September and 1 October this year and in order to enable maximum attendance, it was agreed that this meeting would be postponed until the following week. As the AGM was held immediately afterwards, it was agreed that the Board meeting would begin at 5.30 p.m.

RESOLVED:

that the first full Governing Body meeting would be held at **5.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 8 October**, to be immediately followed by the **AGM**.

6. **Principal's business**Science Centre

NB reported that significant progress had been made regarding the Science Centre and as much as possible was being done before the start of the summer holiday on 4 July. A full update would be given at the next Board meeting.

Machinery of Government

A paper had been prepared by JC and circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. This paper was based on the Consultation document and outlined the position from a Sixth Form College viewpoint. NB explained the possible impact of proposals being made. A record of the discussion which followed, which was deemed to be confidential, would be held separately on file and circulated only to members of the Board.

7. **Committee business**Audit Committee

ES led this item, referring to Minutes which were circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were noted:

- SJ was welcomed as a new member to the Committee;
- Peter Jones announced that he would be leaving Chadwick (the College's External Auditors) and his replacement would take over from September 2008;
- David Whatley of Bentley Jennison presented the final Internal Audit Reports of their tenure. The Committee had decided to go to Tender for the Internal Audit Service and of those who responded 4 were interviewed and two very strong candidates were short-listed. The Interview Panel unanimously chose Clement Keys as the preferred successful Company and this recommendation was brought to the Board for ratification.
- a revised and updated Risk Management Strategy & Disaster Management Plan was presented to the Committee who agreed that it was a most comprehensive document. The scenarios had not only been detailed on paper but, to ensure the rigour of the process, two scenarios chosen at random would be tested later that week. In recommending this document to the Board, ES drew attention to the following:
 - the detailed Key Risks table was also included in the Financial Forecast and they had been updated in light of the College's plans for the future;
 - the top ten Key Risks had been listed in order of significance and impact on the College;
 - the Strategic Aims had been updated following input from the Quality Committee who had suggested a modification of the wording to reflect the College's continued success;
- the latest Internal Audit had reviewed progress against the minor non-compliance whereby Declaration of Eligibility Forms had not been signed. This raised discussion regarding the timing of issue of these forms which caused particular difficulties for Councillors given the date of the local elections and the time required for their completion. The Clerk would investigate alternatives.

Discussion followed:

JH remarked that the inclusion of risks associated with the Capital Project had been extremely interesting as some of those highlighted were not immediately obvious.

RESOLVED:

that the Board ratified the appointment of Clement Keys as the College's new Internal Audit Service;
that the Board accepted the revised Risk Management Strategy & Disaster Management Plan.

Finance Committee

DR, the newly elected Chair of the Finance Committee, led this item, referring to Minutes previously circulated. The following points were noted:

- the Provider Financial Auditor (PFA) had awarded a grade of *Outstanding* in its audit of Financial Management and Governance. This was extremely reassuring for the Committee;
- the Financial Forecast was discussed in some detail. DR drew attention to the following:
 - £1M from reserves would be used towards the new Science Centre;
 - significant efficiency savings had been made, including the training of one of the Premises Supervisors to carry out in-house PAT testing;
 - the Committee recognised that a great deal of work was required to produce the Financial Forecast. The model forecast showed an excellent set of figures which members had reviewed in detail. Forward planning to ensure the College's solvency was taken very seriously. Any Governor seeking further information on the forecast was invited to contact DR;

KW

- the workload for the Finance Department was discussed. Because financial information was provided regularly throughout the year the Committee felt that during the summer months when there were few transactions taking place the Monthly Management Accounts for July and August could be suspended. However, they would be reinstated should any problems occur;
- a great deal of time had been spent in progressing the Science Centre Project. A huge volume of information had been requested and the College was working closely with the LSC to whom an application for funding had been made. There was further discussion of the Science Centre which the Board deemed to be confidential and not included in the published Minutes.

RESOLVED:

that the Financial Forecast for 2008-2011 and the Annual Income & Expenditure Budget for 2008-09 were both accepted by the Board.

Personnel Committee

JH led this item referring to Minutes which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were noted:

- the main discussion at this meeting had been the presentation of staffing statistics. There was some discussion of the difficulties in recruiting to certain teaching areas, notably Health & Social Care and Science subjects, although this was a reflection of a national shortage;
- there had been significant movement of staff throughout the year, mainly because of the retirement of a number of key personnel.

Discussion followed:

IHo asked what efforts were being made to recruit staff to these areas. JC explained that the College worked more closely with Universities and Teacher Training organisations which had resulted in the appointment of more trainee teachers. Advertisements were also placed in the TES, which was the main publication for teaching vacancies, although the College used as many alternative links as possible. IHo suggested advertising in the Schools' sections of the TES as a possible further source of candidates.

Quality Committee

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

- the Committee reviewed a number of large documents at this meeting which were presented to the Board for approval;
- the Three Year Development Plan had been revised in its current form, despite the fact that this was no longer a requirement of the LSC. Attention was drawn to the *Strategic Aims of the College* and the amended wording suggested by the Committee which reflected the fact that the College had maintained its excellent achievement record for the last few years. Instead of "always improving" the Committee had suggested "maintain and where possible improve" as a more realistic aim;
- PR had presented papers to the Committee on a review of the Star Chamber/Self Assessment process which had been streamlined whilst maintaining the same level of rigour. Paperwork had been clarified making it easier to use for staff and Senior Managers;
- feedback on the Student Course Review questionnaire had been excellent. Around 1,300 students had completed the questionnaire of which 90% had responded positively to the vast majority of questions;
- the Quality Cycle had been produced so that staff could be aware of the various processes involved and how they fit together;
- the Governors' Induction Manual had been revised in line with the new Instruments & Articles of Government and a copy had been circulated for information.

RESOLVED:

that the Board accepted the Three-Year Development Plan, Revised Self Assessment/Star Chamber process, Quality Cycle and Governors' Induction Manual.

8.

UpdatesMonthly Management Accounts

BB reported that

- the latest accounts available to the Board were May 2008 (as June had not yet been finalised). Changes had therefore been made since that date to the predicted outturn to July 2008 and the forecasted outturn had been revised. The prediction for the year end was a £56,000 operating surplus instead of the deficit shown in May.
- efficiencies had been recorded on staff costs and in Department budgets;
- there had been no additional income except for a credit note received from KPMG in respect of laboratory equipment.

Summary of College insurance

For information, BB had produced a summary of the various insurance costs following the annual meeting with the College's Insurance Brokers. The review of insurance levels took place to ensure the College remained in line with the number of staff, students and the size of the building. There had not been any major refurbishments or extensions to current facilities although this was expected to change soon. It was noted that the overall cost of insurance had risen by only £3,000.

Health and Safety

NB reported that both Lynn Smith (who had overall responsibility for health and safety procedures in the College) was retiring at the end of term, as was Mieczyslaw Kasprzyk (Kas). Their work has resulted in the College having health and safety processes in place that others could benchmark against. They had taken steps to avoid the numerous potential problems associated with College trips and had worked as an excellent team. Kas completed an annual audit of every room in the College and this consistently showed a clean bill of health with only minor problems such as the size of rooms and housekeeping issues. The Governors were asked to acknowledge the outstanding level of work that both of them had achieved.

A succession plan was in place and Mick Walsh would take over health and safety and Lynn Smith would come into College through the year to monitor certain procedures. David Rayner-Taylor, one of the Premises Supervisors, had experience in first aid and health and safety and having joined the Committee would conduct some of the audits.

Student Association

A warm welcome was extended to both new Student Governors who were congratulated on their election.

Despite a short handover period following their election, due to examinations and study leave, AM and KB were now working with the other members of the Student Executive to draw up a list of activities for the coming year. One suggestion was a trip to Alton Towers after the January examinations and KB was currently setting up a poll to ascertain the level of interest in this. After the group met again in the new term it was expected that there would be more to report to the next meeting.

9. **Any other business**

IN wished to record his thanks to all staff for the help and support given to his son during his three years at the College. He had now qualified as a Doctor and began work at Rochdale Hospital next month. NB added that his son was a credit to his family and to the College.

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

The next meeting would take place at 5.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 8 October, 2008 in Meeting Room 1, followed by the AGM from 6.30 p.m. in the Small Lecture Theatre.

All Staff, Staff & Student Governors left the meeting at this point.

13. **Remuneration Committee**

The Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate. JH led the discussion of this item referring to the Minutes of the last meeting, which were tabled. There was some discussion of the proposals and the points raised were recorded separately as confidential Minutes.

RESOLVED:

that the Remuneration Committee's recommendations were accepted by the Board.

14. **Items of confidentiality**

Governors agreed that some of the discussion under *Principal's business*, feedback from the *Finance Committee* and the discussion of the Remuneration Committee's recommendations were confidential. These notes should be recorded separately and not included in the published Minutes.

The meeting closed at 5.45 p.m.

Submitted to Board for approval: 8 October 2008

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chair of the Corporation