

MINUTES OF THE FEC BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER, 2009

Present: Abdullah Al-Moshin, Nick Brown, 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, Peter Roberts, Mick Walsh, Kath Wrigley (Clerk)
Apologies: Scott Jackson, Linda Newitt, Mike Pitt, Jackie Scholes, Peter Treadwell
Absent: Ian Hill

ACTION

1. **Declaration of Interests**

None was declared.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on 1 July, 2009**

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

3. **Matters arising**

Premature Retirement Policy

A copy of the revised Premature Retirement Policy (PRP) discussed at the meeting on 1 July had been circulated to Governors for further comment. In response to IHo's query, JC explained that the original PRP had been considerably longer. There had been no radical changes to the text but only information relevant to the implementation of the Policy was now included and all reference to specific pensions criteria, which changed frequently, had been removed. IHo commended the fact that both teaching and non-teaching staff were able to take advantage of the Policy, but suggested that the title could be changed to "*Early Retirement Policy*" rather than *Premature*. This was noted.

Subject to this amendment, the Policy was adopted by the Board.

4. **Correspondence**

Shadowing opportunities

GO reported that a letter had been received from the Principal of Winstanley College asking if Governors would be interested in shadowing opportunities whereby members of Winstanley's Board would observe one Committee and one Board meeting before the end of December. It was felt that the College should encourage this and an invitation was extended for Governors to observe the Board meeting on 2 December followed by the AGM as it was thought that the slightly later start of 5.30 p.m. could make it easier for our guests to attend.

Workshop on Corporate Manslaughter

In addition, Governors were invited to take part in a Workshop on Corporate Manslaughter to be held at Winstanley College. However, Governors felt that the presentation on Corporate Manslaughter some time ago was sufficiently detailed and they asked that a message was conveyed to Winstanley on their behalf thanking them, but declining the invitation.

Designation as a Sixth Form

Advance notice had been received that the College would soon be invited to request designation as a Sixth Form College before the end of December. Documents which had been circulated prior to the meeting explained the reasons and this would be raised again in December.

5. **Clerk's business**

KW reported on the recruitment of two new Parent Governors. Letters had been sent out to the parents of all Y12 students inviting expressions of interest in the role and the response had been very encouraging. Because of the number of nominations an election would be held, hopefully in time to elect one new Parent Governor to attend the 2 December Board meeting.

A vacancy still existed for an Independent Governor and this would be further discussed by the Search Committee at their next meeting.

6. **Chairman's business**

Items of Confidentiality

The Chair reminded Governors that a review of all confidential Minutes took place annually at which it was decided whether or not the record of discussions should remain excluded from the published Minutes. The only items of Confidentiality recorded over the previous year included (a) the Minutes of the Remuneration Committee and (b) all discussions regarding the Science Centre recorded in Board and Committee Minutes. Governors agreed that those items deemed to be confidential should remain so.

RESOLVED:

that all items deemed to be confidential during the previous year should continue to be excluded from the published Minutes.

7.

Principal's business

NB reported that:

- there had been a remarkably effective start to the new academic year. More students had been recruited than anticipated, for a number of reasons, but in spite of this the timetable had begun smoothly and effectively, with no problems reported;
- achievement in the summer examinations was the highest ever and the improved AS results were particularly pleasing. As a direct consequence of this the College had over-enrolled this year;
- Rochdale Sixth Form College, which would be an asset to the town, was progressing to schedule and in light of this the College's liaison activities had been withdrawn from some of the schools in the Rochdale area to concentrate on those in and around Oldham. Recruitment was so healthy it had been necessary to turn down some able students who would otherwise have been offered a place had the College been able to accommodate them. All students were reminded at enrolment that they had a place at the College that someone else could have been offered and they should strive to ensure they left the College better than when they arrived;
- it was worth noting that recruitment from Wardle High School and Our Lady's had doubled this year;
- students were currently recruited very differently than in 1992 when the College opened. The College attracted students from a wider core and numbers had reached a level where growth was greater than it was ever thought possible. Despite the uncertain times, from opening in 1992 the College had met all the criteria set for a new College and progressively moved to its current, best position ever. This was very good news;
- this year's successful recruitment had been enhanced by the College's proposals for a Science Centre. Science lessons were well delivered and organised and as a result there remained a high demand for these subjects. The issue of funding for the Science Centre, which was strongly supported by the Local Authority, was unresolved but alternative ways of funding this project were actively being sought. The Local Authority's aspiration for Oldham to become a University Town was predicated on the College's success and the opening of a new Science Centre.

8.

College performance 2009

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

- last year the College was slightly disappointed with AS grades. Nationally, new specifications had been introduced in 2009 in an attempt to make examinations more difficult, less coursework was set and fewer re-sit opportunities allowed. Emphasis had been placed on driving up quality;
- at the last Star Chamber meetings there was optimism about AS results and some concern about A2 achievement. However, the results this year were not only very pleasing but surpassed those obtained by some selective Colleges;
- the A2 pass rate was outstanding. Few Colleges had as many students sitting A2 examinations. The College had an inclusive agenda and offered places to students who would not have been accepted at other institutions;
- this year's overall results were excellent but the College was still seeking ways to improve them;
- the number of A grades was its highest ever in 2008 at 22% and although this year it fell slightly to 19.4% the target for next year would be set at a minimum of 22% A grades;
- A-B success (at 46.6%) was slightly less than in 2008 and a further target would be set to raise this in next year's examinations;
- it was worth drawing attention to the fact that three-quarters of the student body had achieved an A-C pass rate, only 1.6% below the national average, which included selective institutions. The A-C pass rate had increased from 56.7% in 2003 to 74.5% in 2009;
- in terms of teaching and learning strategies, the Senior Management Team had invested in a series of additional revision workshops for students and the value of these had been reflected in this year's results;
- B profile students achievements at A2 were slightly lower in 2009 than 2008;
- evidence gathered suggested that other Colleges were concerned about their AS results. However, this College's 2009 AS results were significantly higher than last year and provided a good platform for A2 courses which would be harder this year with fewer re-sits available;
- the AS pass rate had exceeded expectations. Staff had worked particularly hard this year to support their students and the results bore testament to their efforts;
- Applied Vocational subject results presented a mixed picture and measures were being taken to improve these;
- Applied AS results (other than A-E) had improved significantly. The national pass rates were low but although the College's results were either equal or better than the previous year, staff were reviewing whether this was the best qualification for the students. Applied ICT would be withdrawn from the curriculum as it was the worst performing course and BTEC ICT would be offered as an alternative. Health & Social Care would also be reviewed and the range of Applied courses offered would change following some disappointing AS applied results;

- results for the Applied Single award were disappointing and it was felt that achievement should have been closer to the national average. Staff were likely to consider the possibility of withdrawing these courses in some subject areas;
- the Applied Double award results were above the national figure at both AA and AA-CD;
- in terms of BTEC, results were good in Travel & Tourism, Business and Sport courses;
- PR expressed his thanks to all members of the Board for their support and at this point played a short video of "Results Day 2009".
- PR then reported on the College's results in a value added context. A copy of the ALPS results (initially introduced by Kevin Conway, former principal of Greenhead College) had been circulated prior to the meeting. This report measured how far students had progressed in an institution and a "thermometer" indicated the level of performance;
- for A2 the College was in the top 25% (against the top 10% last year);
- in the detail of the ALPS report there were fewer "blue" scores than ever before. Keeping subjects out of this category had been a major priority this year and real progress had been made in this area;
- the "T" score was an even better way of defining how well an institution was performing, with a (1), (2) or (3) being the best scores. For the last three years the College had remained in the top 10% of providers and this illustrated that students at Oldham Sixth Form College would have an outstanding chance of performing better than at GCSE because of their progress at this College;
- AS and BTEC almost scored (3). Some artwork had been submitted for re-moderating and if grades improved the College's score was likely to rise from *Very Good* to *Excellent*;
- one of the most pleasing result was the (3) score for teaching and learning which indicated that the majority of students would benefit from good teaching and learning styles;
- again the College was in the top 25% for Applied courses and BTEC, having an improved score from (4) to (3);
- these reports presented a very positive picture of the College and provided a good basis for next year and the College's Self-Assessment Report and Action Plan would reflect the excellent performance this year.

NB commented that PR had determined which areas were under-performing and was radically tackling this with a view to improving next year;

JH queried whether ALIS information had been discontinued. PR explained that this would go to the Quality Committee, having been discussed that afternoon by SMT. The results in that report were equally positive;

GO thanked PR for a very clear presentation.

9.

Updates

Monthly Management Accounts (MMAs)

BB led this item, reporting as follows:

- since the last MMAs were produced in June there had been significant changes in the accounts;
- an audit of the final outturn would be taking place over the next two weeks;
- additional income for exceptional items had raised the operating surplus;
- all income and expenditure for the capital project had been removed from the accounts and shown separately, as required by the LSC. However, this showed a higher operating surplus as a result;
- income was in line with predictions;
- savings of £260,000 had been made on expenditure, with teaching departments saving 25% of their budgets, the previous best saving recorded over the last 18 years being 9%;
- there was an anticipated saving of 5% against examination costs. It was unclear, at the beginning of the year, what the total cost of examinations under the new specifications would be, so the same budget was allocated. This had resulted in a better than anticipated saving of around £71,000;
- a saving of £150,000 had been made against the planned maintenance following the decision not to replace some carpets for another three years;
- some problems had been experienced with regard to the capital bid programme this year as a number of replacement texts for the new syllabus had only just been printed. This had given rise to additional savings.

In answer to IHo's query, BB confirmed that the College currently held reserves of £4M. The Financial Forecast indicated that some of these reserves had been earmarked against the capital project, which was still on-going. It had been decided to use reserves rather than borrowing;

IHo asked if money allocated in year must be spent in year and, if money was available at the end of the year, whether the College would target it for in-year spending and development of the Science Centre? Was SMT confident that the College was fully resourced, with the top specification equipment, to promote the highest standard of teaching and learning?

GO responded that in financial terms, Governors could be assured that anything that was required was purchased out of that year's funding wherever possible. It would not be prudent to spend any remaining funding at the year end. Planned expenditure should cover a three-year period, not just the current year. The decision to postpone replacement of the carpets represented a good saving, but the Board would have over-ruled this decision had they been necessary to maintain the College's overall appearance. The College was a credit to the students and illustrated how they felt about where they learn;

NB added that a lot of money had been spent in the College over the last 18 years to maintain its appearance. Any additional funding would be invested in the new Science Centre as it would be prudent to retain it for this purpose. In addition, education was a volatile sector and the College offered places to additional students that were not funded by the LSC. These issues were regularly discussed at SMT;

PR added that the College's finances were so efficiently managed that a series of workshops for students had been provided at the end of the year. This was a contributory factor in helping students achieve high grades in their examinations.

Health & Safety

MW reported as follows:

- there were no major issues to report to the Board;
- so far there had been a fall in the number of swine flu cases, as predicted, in the early part of the summer. However, the number had started to rise again during September (9 students affected) and there had been a steady increase in Oldham. Tissues had been supplied in every room, an action plan had been drawn up and tested and the College was as prepared as possible. All departments were working as usual and staff would continue to monitor the situation closely;
- an automatic external defibrillator (AED) machine had been purchased. Eight staff would be trained in its use by the end of the week. The equipment was intended for use only within the College for the benefit of students, staff and visitors and was funded out of this year's parental donations.

Student Association

AAM reported that the new Executive meetings had begun last week. Both AAM and LR were travelling to London in early October to attend a Student Governor training event and the Student Association members had been invited to attend a youth event. MW added that the Youth Event was taking place on 7 October and all 7 members of the Executive were taking part. Pink Day was being actively promoted amongst students and staff and arrangements were going well.

10. **Any other business**

There was no other business.

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

Governors were reminded that the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, 2 December, 2009 from 5.30 – 6.30 p.m. in Meeting Room 1, followed by the Annual General Meeting in the Small Lecture Theatre.

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

12. **Remuneration Committee**

GO led the discussion of this item referring to the Minutes of the last meeting, which were tabled. The recommendation from the Committee was supported unanimously by those present. Two Governors, who were not present at the meeting, had previously given their agreement to the proposal.

13. **Items of confidentiality**

Governors agreed that 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 6.05 p.m.

Submitted to Board for approval: 2 December, 2009

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chair of the Corporation