

NORTH WEST KENT COLLEGE

CORPORATE BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the CORPORATE BOARD

held at 5.30pm on 21 March 2012 in the Board Room at Dartford.

Present: Mr E Anderson (Chair)
Mrs Susan Adams
Cllr Arron Bardoe
Ms Elizabeth Birchenough
Mr RajVinder Singh- Gill
Mr David Gleed
Mr Robbie Higgins
Mrs Pam Jones
Mr Graham Moody (staff governor)
Mr Brian Newell
Mr Julian Parkes

In attendance: Mr Keith Oxspring (Interim Clerk to the Corporation)
Ms Penny Morgan (Vice-Principal)

1.1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for late arrival had been received from Mr Julian Parkes. In addition, apologies for non attendance had been received from Mr Nick Butterfield. These apologies were formally accepted by the meeting.

Subsequent to the meeting, it was learned that apologies had been received via email earlier in the day from Mr Adam Johnson

1.2 MEET THE NEW MEMBERS OF SMT

Prior to the commencement of the formal meeting, four new members of SMT were introduced to Governors being:

Lawrence Jenkins – Director of Finance
Simon Norris – Director of HR
Alan Howe – Director of MIS
Sean McCormick – Director of IT

Each of the above gave a brief presentation outlining their background and the key objectives in their new roles.

Action

On conclusion of their presentations they were thanked for their presentations. Governors wished them every success in their new roles and looked forward to future updates being made to the board in due course. The four Directors then left the meeting.

1.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Keith Oxspring declared his interest in item 1.5 Clerking arrangements.

1.4 MINUTES

1.4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2012 were accepted as being an accurate record.

1.4.2 MATTERS ARISING

1.4.2.1 Reporting on Health and Safety Matters

The Chair reported that agreement had been reached between the Chair of the Staff & Student Committee and the Estates & Facilities Chairlady that in future, the Health & Safety Report will be presented via the Estates & Facilities Committee with all personnel related issues arising also being presented to the Staff & Student Committee by the Director of HR.

1.5 CLERKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Principal updated the members of the Board with the outcome of the Clerking interviews held on 15 March 2012.

Three candidates had been shortlisted and subsequently interviewed on that day by the Panel and, following a scoring process, two candidates were tied in first place.

The Panel decided that they wished to see both of these candidates again for a second interview which has been subsequently scheduled for 19 April 2012.

As the appointment of the preferred candidate for Clerk cannot be approved until the next Corporate Board meeting on 16 May 2012, the Principal, following agreement with the Chair, has arranged for Mr Keith Oxspring of MCA Cooper Associates to continue in post as Interim Clerk through the Summer Term 2012.

This will ensure all meetings can be adequately prepared for and clerked and allow for a suitable handover period for the new appointee.

1.6 STANDING ORDERS

Copies of a report on the Changes in Further Education Colleges Regulations Ref: CB/21.03.12/1.6 had been circulated to attendees with the agenda.

The Interim Clerk explained that at the previous meeting it had been intended to approve an updated set of Standing Orders for the College. At that meeting, Mr Frank Hardman of MCA Cooper Associates had offered to review the document on behalf of the College before being adopted. In between time, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) had issued a letter to all Colleges advising that as a result of the Education Act that received Royal Assent on 15th November 2011, there was to be more freedom given to Colleges to write their own Instrument and Articles.

The Clerk advised that comments on the changes are to be made by Governors to BIS by Wednesday 29th March 2012. Governors were asked if they would like to submit comments and after a short debate it was decided that although no comments should be submitted to BIS, the Principal should advise the AoC that such changes would invariably make the recruitment of Governors more difficult.

More information regarding the changes is to be provided to Colleges at the end of April 2012 and Governors were advised to await these details before making any changes to either the Standing Orders or Instrument and Articles of Government. It was

RESOLVED:

to receive and note the Report on Changes in Further Education College Regulations.

1.7 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Copies of the Principal's Report Ref: CB/21.03.12/1.7 had been circulated to attendees with the agenda.

The Principal gave an overview of his report highlighting that the final 2012/13 funding allocations for 16-18 from the SFA and 19+ from the SFA were expected to be received by the end of March 2012. He agreed to provide a further update at the next meeting.

Following the resubmission of the (previously unsuccessful) bid to create a University Technical College between Leigh Academies Trust, the University of Greenwich, Bluewater and NWKC, the parties to the bid have been invited to attend an interview with officers from the Department for Education at the end of March to explore the Bid in more detail. A further update will be provided at the next meeting.

Principal

The number of franchised places allocated to the College in 2012/13 by the University of Greenwich has been significantly reduced from 108 to 20. However, we have been successful in winning a bid for 112 (plus 8 AAB) directly funded HEFCE places under the recent 'Core and Margin' bidding round for HE taking the total places available to 140.

Phase 2 of the College re-structure is almost complete with the number of areas requiring any operational changes being much lower than originally anticipated and the net change being a slight increase in roles rather than a reduction. As a result, reaction from the College is muted with the project having much less impact than Phase 1. Governors questioned the change in the organisation within Estates and Facilities and the Principal advised that the new structure would provide the College with greater flexibility to meet future demands in this area.

A re-drafted schedule of Governors meetings was included with the report and this schedule was formally agreed by the meeting. It was

RESOLVED:

to receive and note the Principals Report and agree the revised meeting schedule for 2012/13 included therein.

1.8 RISK REGISTER & RISK REDUCTION PLAN

Copies of the Risk Register & Risk Reduction Plan Report Ref: CB/21.03.12/1.8 had been circulated to attendees with the agenda.

Governors queried the impact of new appointments on the plan and the Principal advised that the immediate impact would be minimal. It was

RESOLVED:

to receive and approve the Risk Register & Risk Reduction Plan Report

1.9 HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT

Copies of the Health & Safety Report Ref: CB/21.03.12/1.9 had been circulated to attendees with the agenda. It was

RESOLVED:

to receive and approve the Health & Safety Report

1.10 FEES POLICY 2012/13

Copies of the Fees Policy Report Ref: CB/21.03.12/1.10 had been circulated to attendees with the agenda. It was

RESOLVED:

to receive and approve the Fees Policy 2012/13 Report.

1.11 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS 2012/13

Copies of the Financial Regulations Report Ref: CB/21.03.12/1.11 had been circulated to attendees with the agenda. It was

RESOLVED:

to receive and approve the Financial Regulations Report

1.12 PERSONNEL POLICIES

Copies of the following Personnel Policies had been circulated to attendees with the agenda:

Annual Leave CB/21.03.12/1.12.1

Dress Code CB/21.03.12/1.12.2

Recruitment Policy & Procedures CB/21.03.12/1.12.3

Staff Employment CB/21.03.12/1.12.4

Staff Discipline CB/21.03.12/1.12.5

Governors queried whether the policies incorporated any provision for allowing work experience students into the College. The Principal advised that this was not the case due to the Health & Safety/CRB implications

At this point Mr Julian Parkes arrived.

It was

RESOLVED:

to receive and approve the above Policies

1.13 SUB COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the following Sub Committee meeting minutes had been circulated to attendees with the agenda:

Estates & Facilities Comm meeting of 23.02.12 CB/21.03.12/1.13.1

Staff & Student Comm' meeting of 28.02.12 CB/21.03.12/1.13.2

Audit Comm' meeting of 29.02.12 CB/21.03.12/1.13.3

Policy & Finance Comm' meeting 03.03.12 CB/21.03.12/1.12.4

Mr Brian Newell raised the issue of the removal of EMA funding that was discussed by the Staff & Student Committee on 28 February 2012. He highlighted that this was causing some hardship to students within the College. The Principal acknowledged Governors' concerns and added that Entry Level/Level 1 students were now more likely to remain in school rather than attend college due to the costs of travel. Some students had taken part time work to alleviate the financial pressure and attendance rates from these students had declined. The College is looking at

introducing more flexible transport arrangements and reducing the number of days that students need to be in College which may alleviate the issue. The Principal highlighted that this was a national problem and not one being experienced solely by North West Kent. Suggestions on tackling the issue were requested from Governors and Cllr Arron Bardoe raised the possibility of student sponsorship.

Contact with students is being maintained and regular dialogue is taking place to keep a close watch on developments. It was

RESOLVED:

to receive and note the minutes of the above meetings.

1.14 CORPORATE CONFERENCE UPDATE

The Principal highlighted an issue raised at the Corporate Conference regarding the claiming of around £1.4m VAT on building related costs. Some time ago, an agreement had been signed with Buzzacotts, our external auditors, to pay a fee of £400k to recover these costs but the signing of the agreement had not been reported to Governors. Although it is impossible to state with certainty, there was no evidence of competitive quotations being obtained.

Unfortunately, the employees signing the contract were no longer with the College so this cannot be verified. Mr Julian Parkes raised the issue as to whether the internal auditors should have picked up this issue. He agreed that the Audit Committee would discuss the arrangement with Buzzacotts and determine whether there were any payments to third parties involved. He also agreed that the proposed audit efficiency review documents currently being discussed by the Audit Committee would be reviewed to take into account these events.

Audit
Committee

1.15 USE OF COLLEGE SEAL 2011/12

Copies of the Use of College Seal Report 2011/12 Report Ref: CB/21.03.12/1.15 had been circulated to attendees with the agenda. It was

RESOLVED:

to receive and approve the Use of College Seal Report.

1.16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other items were raised under any other business

1.17 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

5.30 pm, Wednesday, 16 May 2012 in the Boardroom at Gravesend

The meeting concluded at 7.15pm.