



GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of Meeting on Tuesday 24 January 2017

Present:	Mr J Kirk (<i>Chair</i>)	Chair of Governors	
	Ms N Cuffy	Governor	
	Ms S Gannon	Staff Governor	
	Mr S Holderness	Vice-Chair of Governors	
	Ms S Kacha	Student Governor	
	Ms S Munden	Staff Governor	
	Ms S Overton-Edwards	Principal	
	Mr J Pain	Governor	
	Mr H Solanki	Parent Governor	
	Ms A Touseef	Student Governor	
	In Attendance:	Mr J Bagley	Vice-Principal Curriculum
		Mr H Ravat	Vice-Principal Resources
		Mr R Mansfield	Clerk
		Ms L Hawes	Education Funding Agency
Mr R Wood		Diocesan Directorate of Education	

Ref.		Action
B/17/01	<p>Item 1 – Attendance and Membership Matters:</p> <p><i>1.1 Apologies for Absence</i> Apologies for absence were received from Harnish Hadani, and Naz Leivas-Mistry. The meeting was declared quorate. John Kirk welcomed Lisa Hawes from the Intervention Team of the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Ralph Wood, prospective governor, to the meeting. He also welcomed the student governors, in particular Savannah Kacha whose first attendance this was. He urged the student governors to speak freely. Those present then all briefly introduced themselves.</p> <p><i>1.2 Declarations of Interest in Agenda Items</i> There were no declarations of interest in agenda items.</p>	

Search Committee Matters:*1.3 Board and Committee Vacancies*

Robert Mansfield reported that John Kirk had been nominated and seconded as Chair of Governors. There being no other nominations he declared John Kirk duly elected. He had also received a completed nomination form for Steve Holderness to serve as Vice-Chair. Having ascertained that there were no other candidates, he declared Steve Holderness duly elected as Vice-Chair. He offered John Kirk and Steve Holderness his congratulations and best wishes for success in moving the College forward.

There had been progress in finding two candidates, one of whom was Ralph Wood, with appropriate educational experience to fill vacancies on the Board. These candidates would be considered at the meeting of the Search Committee on 9 February 2017.

The meeting received this oral report.

B/17/02**Item 2 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising:***2.1 Minutes of Meeting on 15 December 2016*

The minutes of the meeting on 15 December 2016 were accepted as an accurate record and were duly signed by John Kirk. Lisa Hawes asked the meeting to note the following points:

- The reference under item 3.2 to the EFA having to *approve* the revised Post-Inspection Action Plan was technically incorrect; it was the role of the EFA to monitor progress and to provide challenge where necessary
- The reference under item 5.3 to the EFA *capping growth* was also inaccurate; the EFA would in fact consider the impact of possible growth upon future provision.

Robert Mansfield thanked her for these clarifications.

2.2 Matters Arising from the Minutes

It was confirmed that the actions listed in the minutes had been taken or would be covered under agenda items.

B/17/03**Item 3 – Curriculum and Quality Issues:***3.1 Post-Inspection Action Plan and subsequent Position Statements on key Themes as at 15 January 2017*

In the absence of Naz Leivas-Mistry Suzanne Overton-Edwards reported on matters relating to the Post-Inspection Action Plan (PIAP). At the suggestion of Robert Mansfield she did this by referring the meeting to the notes of the Performance Improvement Group on 17 January 2017 (listed as item 9.4 in

the agenda). She explained that following the OfSTED monitoring visit earlier in January, the PIAP was being recast in a simpler format round six themes. Upon the advice of Adam Suddaby (representing Leicester City Council) and Marina Gaze (a former Senior OfSTED Inspector), who were supporting the College's efforts to improve, matters to do with governance had been included in the PIAP. James Bagley was leading the implementation of the plan with the support of named individuals for each theme.

John Kirk said that the PIAP was a very long document that clearly required more focus. He asked all governors to note that governance had been graded inadequate, and that there had been a failure adequately to hold managers to account. He recognized that he had himself, both as a Board member and latterly as Chair of the Standards & Quality Committee, received and accepted reports without independent validation. The Board needed assistance to improve. He, Steve Holderness and Suzanne Overton-Edwards were to visit a high-performing college that had been through the transition from being inadequate. A change of culture was required, and he encouraged colleagues to be more searching in their questions. The performance of governors needed itself to be monitored. Jim Pain felt that governors needed to 'get out on the shop floor' and to have direct communication with staff and students. The Board had not talked enough about education. John Kirk said that there was now scope for governors to be more involved, for example by taking part in learning walks. Steve Holderness said that governors lacked a credible basis for evaluating what they observed. They did not receive a breakdown of students' progress and anticipated results, and needed the expertise to interpret such reports. Robert Mansfield said that such reports were routinely considered by the Standards & Quality Committee, albeit their content required improvement. John Kirk said that a start had been made with the introduction of the e-Grade Book and the dashboard. Steps were in hand to improve MIS, and the introduction of CEDAR would be another step forward. Steve Holderness said that governors needed accessible reports based on live data. James Bagley said that it was necessary also to have reliable input and reports of good quality. Some of the data were necessarily predictive, and the quality of these would become apparent through comparisons with results obtained in BTEC modules and the summer examinations. Steve Holderness repeated that the Board and the appropriate committees needed reports on whether students were progressing in the right direction. John Kirk said that there must be more emphasis on a triangulated

approach founded on relevant reports, robust challenge and independent validation. Robert Mansfield stressed the need for reports to governors to be appropriate to their needs: headlines, comparison with appropriate standards, trends, exceptions and the ability to drill down. James Bagley undertook to provide suitable reports, in consultation with Robert Mansfield, from CEDAR.

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The meeting received the report on the PIAP and related matters.

B/17/04 Item 4 – Student Issues:

4.1 Student Matters

The student governors then presented oral reports on matters of concern to students and the recent activities of the Student Executive Team (SET). Savannah Kacha said recent meetings of the SET had been concerned with the OfSTED inspection, finance, quality and the difficulties the students were facing regarding high prices in canteen. They had also been discussing an end-of-year activity for the students in their last year. The SET had discussed various matters with the Canteen Manager pertaining to the menu choices in the canteen and canteen prices. Harshad Solanki said that he sympathized with students, and in particular with those who were reliant on bursary funds, as the costs of transport and other necessities were constantly rising. Steve Holderness said it would be interesting to compare the actual average spend in the canteen with the average spend predicated in Midshire's business model. If there was a significant difference, rethinking was required. Hamid Ravat said that the College was not in a position to instruct Midshire to alter prices, as they were independent contractors. It was however clearly not in their interest to price themselves out of the market.

Savannah Kacha said that the members of the SLT were not visible and students generally did not know who they were. The SET would like to see SLT members leading subject workshops for students. Suzanne Overton-Edwards referred to a recent SLT Question Time for students, though this had not been well-attended. She would consider other ways in which SLT members could make themselves more visible.

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Alishah Touseef said that there were insufficient resources for students, such as chairs in classrooms, study areas and computers. Naz Leivas-Mistry was to respond to the SET on various matters. The SET felt that too many students had been recruited but could equally appreciate that some might not have found places elsewhere in a similarly caring environment. Steve Holderness said that the Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee had very recently received assurances

that the availability of space for independent learning was no longer a concern. It now appeared that space remained a problem for students. Alishah Touseef said that some classrooms were too small and that there was insufficient space for independent learning. The Mezzanine Study Area was still being used for classes and was not always properly overseen. Nelista Cuffy asked what arrangements were in place for students to access computers. Hamid Ravat said that the College provided nearly one computer device for every two students. The sector norm was about 1:3; however he accepted that the College recruited a higher proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and the need was therefore greater. This matter was kept under continuing review.

The SET had met with Mohamed Ahmed to discuss the Gateway values and had put forward ideas for making the values more appealing to students.

Suzanne Overton-Edwards asked that a list of matters on which the SET was awaiting a response should be sent to her so that she could report back to the next meeting. John Kirk asked that she should report back to the Student Affairs Committee on all these matters on 20 February 2017. He thanked the student governors for their input, which was highly valued.

The meeting received this oral report.

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Item 5 – Finance & Estates Matters:

5.1 Estates Issues

Hamid Ravat reported that the main item of current significance relating to the College's estate was the disposal of the Blackbird Road land. It was hoped that this would be considered by Leicester City Council's Planning Committee in February 2017.

The meeting received the oral report on estates issues.

5.2 Annual Health & Safety Statistics

Hamid Ravat advised the meeting that reported health-related incidents were running at a somewhat higher level than in the previous year. There were no significant concerns relating to safety.

The meeting received the annual health and safety statistics.

5.3 Learner Numbers and Funding Report

Hamid Ravat presented the learner numbers and funding report. The report showed no change and confirmed that the College had exceeded its recruitment targets by 103 students.

The meeting received the learner numbers and funding report.

5.4 Operating Results

Hamid Ravat presented the highlights of the operating results to December 2016. The operating deficit was £115K worse than budget, almost entirely because pay costs were £112K above budget. This in turn had mainly arisen because of increased student numbers. The outturn for the year was now predicted as a deficit of £200K. He believed that the College should be able to return to breakeven during 2017/2018 and that this should be its aim. Lisa Hawes suggested that the College should submit a business case to the EFA in support of a claim for special funding for exceptional growth, though she could not promise that such funding would be granted. She would provide Hamid Ravat with further advice on the relevant thresholds by email.

Hamid Ravat confirmed that the cash position was healthy and should remain so for the remainder of the year.

The meeting received the operating results.

5.5 Bank Loan Covenants Update

Hamid Ravat presented a paper recently considered by the Finance, Staffing and General Purposes Committee. There was £1.4 million of the 20-year loan from Lloyds Bank still outstanding. The loan was conditional upon the observance of five covenants. In the current academic year the College would make a deficit and cash flow would be negative. Were this to happen for three consecutive years the College would be in breach of two of the covenants. Any breach would be likely to trigger renegotiation of the loan on less favourable terms. He assured John Kirk that Lloyds Bank was kept informed every year of the College's compliance with the covenants.

The meeting received the report.

B/17/06

Item 6 – Marketing Issues:

6.1 Marketing Update

James Bagley provided an oral update on progress against the marketing plan. Fuller details were contained in the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee on 19 January 2017 (listed as item 9.3 in the agenda). The headlines were as follows. There had been considerable positive media coverage and an increase in the College's followership on social media. Interview booklets containing course leaflets would be available by the end of the month. The number of alumni had increased and there was shortly to be a meeting with Programme Area Managers to discuss how best to engage alumni in encouraging and inspiring students to progress. *Word on the Street* was being

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developed to increase student focus and involvement; the next edition was due at the end of February. He then referred to the Parents' Evening and the forthcoming HE Fair and Fashion Show. John Kirk asked how many 'high tariff' universities were attending the HE Fair. James Bagley said that most of the institutions booked matched the profile of the College's former students; he thought that four or five 'high tariff' universities might attend. Steve Holderness said that marketing needed to work positively through parents and students, and to be prepared for damage limitation when necessary. John Kirk said that John Turner had been advised by the Sixth Form Colleges Commissioner that the College had a strong brand that should not be seriously affected by the adverse OfSTED report and that recruitment was likely to be resilient. However Hamid Ravat had been asked, as a precaution, to undertake a sensitivity analysis of the impact of a 10% fall in recruitment.

The meeting received the marketing update.

B/17/07 **Item 7 – Staffing Issues:**

7.1 Staffing Report

Hamid Ravat presented the main points of the staffing report for January 2017. There had been five new recruits, of whom three were Progress Coaches (one being an additional post to cope with higher student numbers). Five members of staff were on maternity leave. Headcount was 5.4 FTE above budget. Sickness absence was below the sector average but slightly above the average for sixth form colleges. Steve Holderness confirmed that he was content with the format of the reports.

The meeting received the staffing report.

7.2 Staff Survey Action Plan

Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she had recently reported in detail on progress against the staff survey action plan to the Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee. The headlines were that the targets relating to communications and consultation had been met, but she had yet to produce a staff bulletin and there was more to do to improve the visibility of SLT members.

The meeting noted this oral report.

B/17/08 **Item 8 – Governance Issues:**

8.1 Modifications to Governance Arrangements

Robert Mansfield presented a short paper on steps to improve the focus of governors' meetings and to avoid overload on the Chair of Governors. The meeting endorsed proposals (a)

to stand down the Strategy Working Group, most of its work in respect of the strategic plan being assigned to the Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee and the Standards & Quality Committee (who would work within guidelines set by the Chair and the Vice-Chair), and (b) to combine the Search Committee and the Remuneration Committee. These proposals were accepted. Robert Mansfield said he would amend the terms of reference accordingly. The meeting noted also that the Standards & Quality Committee had amended the terms of reference of the Performance Improvement Group to focus solely on the PIAP and its implementation.

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The meeting received the paper on modifications to governance arrangements.

John Kirk observed that the next items included five policies for endorsement. These had all been scrutinised and commended by the appropriate committees, after due consultation with staff representatives. He invited the meeting to endorse the policies en bloc, unless there were serious concerns about any of them. This was agreed.

8.2 Behaviour and Discipline Policy

The meeting endorsed the behaviour and discipline policy.

8.3 Equality Policy

The meeting endorsed the equality policy.

8.4 CPD Policy

The meeting endorsed the CPD policy.

8.5 Annual Report on Continuing Professional Development

Robert Mansfield explained that the annual report on continuing professional development (CPD) had been produced to comply with the Code of Good Governance. This was the first report of its kind presented to the Board. The Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee had found that there had been too little attention to the relevance and quality of some CPD, and to its value and impact. John Kirk said that this matter had received insufficient attention in the past. Nelista Cuffy said that some CPD provided by the College (as opposed to arranged by individuals) had clearly been excellent, but there had been little evidence of its application.

The meeting received the report.

8.6 Harassment Policy.

The meeting endorsed the harassment policy.

8.7 Data Protection Policy

The meeting endorsed the data protection policy.

B/17/09 Item 9 – Consent Agenda:

John Kirk introduced the following items in turn, inviting major comments or questions only.

9.1 Minutes of the Search Committee 5 January 2017

9.2 Minutes of the Standards & Quality Committee 10 January 2017

9.3 Minutes of the Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee 19 January 2017

9.4 Notes of the Performance Improvement Group 17 January 2017

The meeting received in turn the minutes of committees as listed above.

B/17/10 Item 10 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:

The Board noted that a meeting was scheduled for 6 April 2017 at 5.30 p.m. at the College. Robert Mansfield said that it was almost certain that a further meeting would be needed before then, but that it was not yet possible to set a date; he would notify members as soon as was practicable.

B/17/11 Item 11 – Any Other Business:

There was no other business.

B/17/12 Item 12 – Confidential Items

Robert Mansfield reminded the meeting that the paper for next item had been provided in strict commercial confidence.

12.1 Area-Based Review Update

Robert Mansfield presented a short paper setting out the options pertaining to the three Leicester sixth form colleges that had been agreed at the fourth Steering Group meeting of the Area-Based Review. The Corporation was asked to give formal approval to recommendation 2, that:

Gateway Sixth Form College will initially focus on its priority challenge to raise standards and will subsequently consider joining the formal partnership with Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I and Regent Sixth Form Colleges with the aim of creating a sixth form college offer across the city of Leicester

which is of high quality, offers coherent curriculum options and is financially sustainable.

Several members asked questions about the degree of choice that would in reality be open to the College after it had regained its good standing with OfSTED. John Kirk said he believed that the wording could be taken at face value. Robert Mansfield said that the approval of the Board was also required before 5 February 2017, the date of the fifth steering group meeting, to recommendation 8, whose wording had yet to be agreed by the Principals and Chairs of all colleges within the scope of the review. This recommendation would relate to the establishment of a body to oversee implementation of the other recommendations from the Area-Based Review. John Kirk explained that the draft presented to the fourth steering group meeting had caused considerable concern about the title and proposed remit of this body. Robert Mansfield said he doubted that it would be possible to convene a quorate meeting at very short notice to deal with this matter. He therefore proposed that it should be handled through Chair's Action. After discussion it was agreed that Robert Mansfield should circulate the proposed wording by email as soon as possible for comment and that John Kirk should be authorized, after consultation with Steve Holderness, to give or withhold the approval of the Corporation. Nelista Cuffy then proposed and Jim Pain seconded a resolution to approve recommendation 2, as set out above, and to authorize John Kirk, as described above, to give or withhold the Corporation's approval for recommendation 8.

The meeting approved decisions regarding recommendations from the Area-Based Review as recorded above.