



FINANCE, STAFFING AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting on Thursday 15 October 2015

Present:	Mr J Turner (<i>Chair</i>)	Vice Chair of Governors
	Ms S Munden	Staff Governor
	Ms S Overton-Edwards	Principal
	Mr H Solanki	Parent Governor
In Attendance:	Mr J Bagley	Vice-Principal Curriculum
	Mr H Ravat	Vice-Principal Resources
	Mr R Mansfield	Clerk

Ref.		Action
F/15/42	<p>Item 1 – Apologies for Absence: An apology for absence was received from Naz Leivas-Mistry. The meeting was declared quorate.</p>	
F/15/43	<p>Item 2 – Declaration of Interests in Agenda Items: There were no declarations of interest in the items listed on the agenda.</p>	
F/15/44	<p>Item 3 – Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising: The minutes of the meeting on 16 June 2015 were accepted as an accurate record and were duly signed by John Turner. Under matters arising James Bagley confirmed that he had given the guidance requested on the location of brand guidelines in Sharepoint. John Turner asked how far the guidelines were being observed. James Bagley said that firm guidance was sometimes necessary.</p>	
F/15/45	<p>Item 4 – Estates Issues: <i>4.1 Estates Matters</i> Hamid Ravat presented a short paper covering estates summer works and improvements to IT resources. The new entrance porch had successfully addressed the problems of draughts in the Reception area, and the relocated turnstiles had considerably reduced the level of unauthorised entries by students and former students. He summarised the various other minor repairs and improvements that had been completed. The number of computers and iPADS had been increased by about 70. The College now had available one computer</p>	

device for approximately every two students, a much better ratio than the sector benchmark of 1:3. There were very few complaints from students about shortages of IT equipment. In the discussion of this point it was noted that students were also increasingly able to use their own mobile devices, including phones, to access College systems. While this presented some additional risks, the College's networks were very secure.

There had been no viral invasions from such devices.

As previously reported, Barratts were continuing to work with Leicester City Council Planners regarding the planning application for the Blackbird Road site.

The College was broadly up-to-date with the planned maintenance schedule, and had, as planned, focused mainly upon painting and decoration in 2014/2015.

Suzanne Overton-Edwards reported that Keith Vaz, MP, had during a recent visit to the College remarked upon the excellence of its condition six years after the relocation.

The meeting received the report on estates issues

4.2 Annual Health & Safety Report 2014/2015

Hamid Ravat presented the annual health & safety report for 2014/2015. There had been further reductions in incidents in and accidents on College premises despite the increased number of students.

He then described the preventive actions taken in respect of first-aid training, minibus journeys and driver training, compliance with fire regulations, and staffing – including the role of Harry Wheatcroft as external advisor. John Turner congratulated Hamid Ravat on a most successful recent fire drill. Hamid Ravat confirmed that there had been no notifiable RIDDOR incidents.

Suzanne Overton-Edwards asked the meeting to note that the College had had recently to notify the public health authorities that two members of staff had contracted scarlet fever. No further action had been required and the staff members had since returned to work.

The meeting received the annual health & safety report 2014/2015.

F/15/46 Item 5 – Finance Issues:

5.1 Learner Numbers and Funding 2015/2016

Hamid Ravat presented the first report on learner numbers and funding for 2015/2016. The numbers were provisional in that they preceded the first census, which was due very shortly, and the split between EFA and SFA funded learners had still to be verified. The student role was 84 above target. Even though some modest further attrition was likely, the College appeared to be well-placed to cope with the

reductions in funding for 2016/2017 that had so far been announced – although further reductions were expected to be announced shortly. Hamid Ravat was asked to bring an updated report to the Board in December 2015.

The meeting received the learner numbers and funding report.

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5.2 Management Accounts 2014/2015

Hamid Ravat presented the draft management accounts (subject to audit) for 2014/2015. The Financial Statements Auditors had so far not requested any changes.

He was pleased to report that the College had achieved an underlying surplus of £255K, £50K better than budget. The actual surplus, after deduction of the FRS17 Pension charge (over which the College had no control) and a reduction in depreciation, was £149K.

Income had been £121K better than budget because, even though the Skills Funding Agency had as expected clawed back £24K, the College had received additional grants, most notably an HNS LA ALS Top Up grant of £82K.

Pay expenditure was £18K below budget, mainly as a result of saving arising from maternity leave and a vacant post.

Operating expenses were £131K above budget, in particular because of the additional costs of supply staff to cover maternity leave and cope with higher student numbers.

There was a discussion on the premium paid for supply staff. Hamid Ravat thought that this was about 30%, on top of which the College had also to pay VAT, making about 50% in total. Capital expenditure, mainly on IT equipment, was just below its budget.

There were no concerns regarding the balance sheet. The bank loan had reduced to £1.6 million. The College had a healthy cash balance of over £2.6 million. The key performance indicators were all within their target ranges. The College remained compliant with its bank loan covenants.

The continuing improvement in the College's financial health was closely linked to the continuing growth in student numbers. John Turner observed that Hamid Ravat and his team had shown themselves to be highly competent at planning and forecasting, and he congratulated Hamid Ravat upon another excellent set of figures.

The meeting received the draft management accounts 2014/2015.

F/15/47 Item 6 – Human Resources Issues:

6.1 Staffing Update

Hamid Ravat presented the staffing report. He asked the meeting to note that many of the new ECSW members of staff

had been appointed on temporary one-year contracts. There were now two DMU IT Technicians, one of whom was a former College student. This arrangement was better suited to the College's evolving needs and helped to strengthen the link with De Montfort University.

Staffing numbers were about four above budget and four members of staff were on maternity leave. There was one vacancy, for which an offer of appointment had been made that day.

The meeting received the staffing update.

6.2 Sickness Absence Statistics

Staff absence for the year to date was running at well below sector average rates.

The meeting received the sickness absence statistics.

6.3 College Staff Opinion Survey

Suzanne Overton-Edwards gave an oral report on action since that staff opinion survey. An action plan had been developed to address the key issues of communication and trust. The plan was being finalised through consultation with the Staff Consultative Committee, which included representatives from all areas of the College. Actions already taken included the launch of SLT Question Time. In fact no-one had attended the first SLT Question Time, as it was claimed that staff were unaware of it. Publicity was to be strengthened for future such events. James Kewin had also visited to provide a broader sector perspective.

The meeting received this oral report.

F/15/48

Item 7 – Marketing Issues:

7.1 Marketing Plan 2015/2016

James Bagley presented the marketing plan for 2015/2016. This built upon the good work undertaken in 2014/2015 and which he believed had made a significant contribution to the strong recruitment earlier reported. There was however more to be done. The College film should very soon be available. John Turner asked that this should be shown to the Board on 29 October if at all possible.

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James Bagley then briefly commented on the elements of the plan, highlighting in the short term media campaigns and the Open Day on 14 November 2015. He then presented samples of the redesigned prospectus and other promotional materials. It was agreed that James Bagley should send details of events to which governors were invited to Robert Mansfield for onward transmission. It was suggested that James Bagley should invite Jade Walsh to attend a meeting of the Board or the Committee so that she might present the

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marketing update.

The meeting received the marketing plan.

F/15/49

Item 8 – General Issues:

8.1 Post-16 Area Reviews Status Report

Suzanne Overton-Edwards provided an oral résumé of the recent meetings about Post-16 Area Reviews at which the College had been represented. She believed it unlikely that schools and academies, though invited to take part, would engage with the process. All parties present, whilst interested in discussing generalities, had 'kept their cards close to their chests' until the situation was clearer. She had been heartened to learn that the process would be chaired by the Commissioner or a Commissioner's delegate.

The meeting noted this update.

8.2 Progress against Strategic Plan 2015/2016

Suzanne Overton-Edwards presented a report on progress against the strategic plan targets due for review by the Committee. These related to student numbers and staff sickness absence. Progress was ahead of targets.

The Committee received this report.

8.3 Code of Good Governance for English Colleges

Robert Mansfield reminded the Committee that the Board had at its last meeting indicated that it wished the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges to be brought to its meeting on 29 October 2015 together with an action plan to address non-compliances, the latter being developed by the Strategy Working Group. Robert Mansfield said that the development of the action plan as described had proved impractical. He and John Turner had undertaken assessments of how far the College complied with the Code; their conclusions had been similar in respect of the great majority of items. Suzanne Overton-Edwards and John Kirk had been invited to undertake similar assessments, but had yet to complete them. Robert Mansfield therefore proposed to build in the work so far completed to produce a combined version of the views of John Turner and himself and in the light of this to put forward for debate a list of priorities for attention. He believed that, in view of the scope and complexity of the work to create the next strategic plan, scrutiny of the development and execution of the action plan for the Code would be better assigned to the Search Committee rather than the Strategy Working Group, as previously instructed. John Turner said that he fully supported these proposals.

The Committee commended to the Board the proposed way forward in respect of the Code of Good Governance.

8.4 Bursary Fund Policy

Hamid Ravat presented the bursary fund policy for 2015/2016. Changes to the policy had been drafted by Shirley Munden and then reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team. The policy now included a section on Free Meals. Hamid Ravat said that Shirley Munden and the College MIS and Student Services teams were to be congratulated on the drafting and the practical arrangements. In answer to John Turner, Shirley Munden confirmed that students could use their ID cards to obtain meals once only per day. She also advised him that the College was entitled to claim up to 5% to cover administrative expenses.

The meeting commended the bursary fund policy to the Board.

8.5 Whistle Blowing Policy

Robert Mansfield presented the whistle blowing policy. He had at the suggestion of Hamid Ravat added the auditors to the list of external agencies to whom concerns might be reported. He had also updated a job title in the Appendix. The policy was otherwise unchanged.

The meeting commended the whistle blowing policy to the Board.

8.6 Governors' Expenses Policy

Robert Mansfield presented the governors' expenses policy for review. He had slightly amended the procedure to reflect the fact that packs of papers were no longer posted out to governors. There was a suggestion that expense forms should be uploaded to the website from whence they could be downloaded by individual governors. This suggestion was withdrawn when attendant administrative obstacles were explained.

The meeting commended the governors' expenses policy to the Board.

F/15/50 Item 9 – Date and Time of next Meeting:

The date and time of the next meeting would be Tuesday 17 November 2015 at 5.30 p.m. at the College.

F/15/51 Item 10 – Any Other Business:

10.1 Human Resources Policy

Hamid Ravat presented the human resources policy, which had been subject to recent slight amendment as a result of consultation with staff unions. The change related to the section on probationers. John Turner questioned why there was no reference to the Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee on page 4 section 1.5. It was agreed that this

should be added.

The meeting commended the amended human resources policy to the Board, subject to the amendment noted above.

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