



FINANCE, STAFFING AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting on Thursday 18 May 2017

Present:	Mr S Holderness (<i>Chair</i>) Ms S Munden Mr M Sim	Governor Staff Governor Principal
In Attendance:	Mr H Ravat Mr J Bagley Mr R Mansfield	Vice-Principal Resources Vice-Principal Curriculum & Quality Clerk

Ref.		Action
F/17/21	Item 1 – Apologies for Absence: An apology for absence were received from Harshad Solanki. The meeting was declared quorate.	
F/17/22	Item 2 – Declaration of Interests in Agenda Items: There were no declarations of interest in agenda items.	
F/17/23	Item 3 – Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising: The minutes of the meeting on 23 March 2017 were accepted as an accurate record and were duly signed by Steve Holderness. Actions listed in the minutes had been taken as required. There were no other matters arising.	
F/17/24	Item 4 – Estates Issues: 4.1 Estates Matters Hamid Ravat presented an oral report on estates matters. An emergency evacuation of the College had taken place on 27 April 2017, after the discovery of a suspicious item in the D Block toilets. There had been an impressive response from the police and emergency services. The item had been eventually identified as equipment inadvertently left by an electrical contractor. The contractor had apologised. The College had been congratulated on its action. Martin Sim recorded his thanks to Tesco who had kindly provided free tea. Hamid Ravat reported that the College had on 16 May 2017 received an unannounced Environmental Health visit to the kitchen and canteen areas. The College had maintained its five-star rating, although it had now to respond to various	

minor recommendations. Steve Holderness congratulated the College and Midshire Catering on this result.

Hamid Ravat reported that Barratts had indicated that they were minded to stand by the minimum price of £7 million previously agreed for the Blackbird Road land. The list of deductions was to be subjected to scrutiny by Barratts, the College and Leicester City Council (as co-owners). Any fees incurred by the College (estimated at £3K) would be reclaimed from the proceeds of the sale. He confirmed that the College stood to gain nothing (above its approved disposal expenses) from the sale as all the net proceeds would be returned to the Education & Skills Funding Agency. Continuing consideration was being given to the programme of summer works. It appeared likely that the works would include the upgrading of the temporary science laboratory (at a cost of £60K to £70K), possible extension of the mezzanine area (see item 4.2 below) and significant capital expenditure to replace the remaining 'thin client' computers and laptops. (There were estimated to be about 170 and 50 of these, respectively.) Martin Sim said that the outcome of the current thorough review of the curriculum and the timetable might well affect the programme of summer works.

The meeting received the oral report on estates issues.

4.2 Future Accommodation Options

Hamid Ravat presented a short paper on accommodation with particular reference to spaces for independent learning. The paper began by summarizing the context (learner numbers and class sizes) and the College's current facilities for students and staff. The paper had been occasioned by concerns expressed by students, and hence by OfSTED, about a lack of space for independent learning.

He had undertaken a survey of the provision of independent learning space by the three Leicester sixth form colleges. From this it appeared that the College provided more study spaces per caput than the other two colleges. However it was recognized that the provision of study spaces with suitable IT facilities was an issue faced by many colleges nationally. The paper contained an analysis of estimated peak and average demand and suggested that it would be efficient and appropriate to cater for a mean level of about 200 places.

Martin Sim said that, although the College appeared to compare favourably with the other two Leicester sixth form colleges, to be outstanding it should base its strategy on national comparisons. The link he had just established with Huddersfield College, one of the few colleges currently rated Outstanding, should be helpful in this regard. Steve

Holderness asked whether some of the space supposedly available to students was not in fact used instead for lessons. Hamid Ravat said that the picture was complicated, and that the main difficulties occurred during early morning sessions. Steve Holderness said that he fully accepted the need for sensible management of space, but he remained concerned about student perceptions, even if they might sometimes be inaccurate, and was worried that these might again adversely influence the judgment of OfSTED. He then asked whether all students were fully aware of the spaces currently available and whether the spaces were being well used. Hamid Ravat said that his inspections at morning break indicated that the spaces were being well used. Martin Sim cautioned against expecting students to have access to unused computers at all times when classes were being taught. This could adversely affect the experience of the students being taught in the classes.

The paper set out actions to be explored further to enhance the learning spaces available. Steve Holderness said that it would be good to see the number of spaces increased to 200. It would be important to cost any action. Martin Sim said that, given the structure of the timetable, it was reasonable to suppose that 20% of students (outside the lunchtime peak) might be in College outside their study blocks. This might indicate a need to provide nearer to 300 spaces. Steve Holderness said that he believed that the analysis in the paper and the action suggested would enable the College to answer OfSTED's concerns.

In answer to questions about available funding, Hamid Ravat said that the Capital Grants Return for 2019/2020 had just been announced. Martin Sim said that he believed that to obtain significant funding the College would need to consider options such as opening a Free School and /or expanding its facilities to cater for the increasing demand for SLDD places. Both would require careful consideration and management. The latter was a highly sensitive issue as the College was currently forced to deny places to some SLDD applicants. Steve Holderness said that the strategic direction of the College needed to be redefined. He thanked Hamid Ravat for his paper.

The meeting received the paper.

4.3 Health & Safety Statistics

Hamid Ravat presented the health & safety statistics to 10 May 2017. The report showed a continuing year-on-year increase in reported incidents. This was attributable to a rise in health-related incidents rather than accidents. The largest category of accidents was sports-related. There were no concerning

trends.

The meeting received the health & safety statistics.

F/17/25

Item 5 – Finance Issues:

5.1 Operating Results 2016/2017

Hamid Ravat presented the operating results to April 2017. In the first nine months the College had generated a deficit of £487K, £275K worse than budget. Income was £67K above budget, as a result of additional funding for high needs learners from Leicester City Council.

Pay expenditure was £313K above budget, mainly attributable to higher teaching staff pay and the costs of supply teachers. Steve Holderness asked why pay costs for the Sports Hall, albeit modest, were above budget. Hamid Ravat said this was owing to increased bookings for the Sports Hall, which had generated higher income. Steve Holderness asked whether the operating deficit would be corrected in 2017/2018 by the lag in funding. Hamid Ravat said that work was in hand on the budget for 2017/2018 with a view to bringing it back to breakeven or a modest surplus. Martin Sim said that the main causes of the deficit were unmanaged growth and too broad a curriculum. These were being addressed. Steve Holderness said that the staffing ratio also needed to be corrected. Martin Sim said that a very robust approach was being taken to the management of long-term sickness. Steve Holderness stressed that the College must not have another year of significant deficit.

Hamid Ravat reported that non-pay expenditure was £28K over budget. The main adverse variances, for teaching departments and examinations, related to higher recruitment. He predicted that the year 2016/2017 would produce an operating deficit of £250K or somewhat more. He also advised the Committee that a re-structuring of middle management was in progress. Voluntary severance payments of £100K to £150K were likely to result, which would be categorised as 'below the line'. The College remained very solvent, with the year-end cash position forecast as in the range £2.4 to £2.6 million.

Steve Holderness asked what were the conditions of the voluntary severance. Hamid Ravat said that voluntary severance was available only if it was offered by the College when a post was to be restructured. Martin Sim said that it was necessary to create movement so that the organisation could be reorganised painlessly. This was also a useful way of dealing with some staff on long-term sickness. Voluntary severance was amicable and often less costly. He was trying to build ahead of the next OfSTED inspection. Shirley Munden concurred and said it was clear that change was necessary.

She had herself decided to opt for voluntary severance.

The meeting received the operating results.

5.3 Course Sizes and Learner Programme Efficiencies

James Bagley presented an update on a paper presented in January 2017. This showed that the numbers of learners on programmes of below optimum hours, and for whom the College was therefore entitled to lower funding, was somewhat greater than previously reported, even though a relatively small number of students had in the meantime had their programmes increased. The reasons for the decline were delays in processing programme changes and recent decisions to remove students from courses on which they had failed or were likely to fail. The paper analysed the underlying causes and listed actions to redress them. James Bagley assured the meeting that changes to processes should stem the previous flow of inappropriate admissions by some teachers on to their courses and unregulated action to approve small programmes or to reduce programme sizes early in the year. Martin Sim said that part of the problem had lain in the decision to include enrichments in study programmes, and this practice would be discontinued.

The meeting received the paper.

F/17/26 Item 6 – Human Resources Issues:

6.1 Staffing Update

Hamid Ravat presented the staffing update. Staffing numbers were four FTE above budget. One of those on long-term sickness was beginning a phased return to work. Hamid Ravat reported that sickness absence was still running at above national benchmarks. Martin Sim advised the meeting that filling the vacancies for teachers of Chemistry and Mathematics might well prove challenging in the current environment, especially given the College's OfSTED inspection grading.

The meeting received the staffing update.

F/17/27 Item 7 – Marketing Issues:

7.1 Marketing Update

James Bagley presented the marketing update. The key points were that the College had secured continuing favourable coverage in *The Leicester Mercury* and had three case studies on the AoC website. There had been a small continuing increase in followership on social media. An adverse posting on Facebook had been taken down after contact with the originator.

Steve Holderness said that it was important for the College to be gearing up its marketing in readiness for the recruitment

drive. James Bagley agreed, and said that it would be necessary to take into account the impact of ongoing work on the curriculum and the timetable. Martin Sim said that applications were showing no sign of year-on-year decline. The figures for re-enrolments in June should prove a strong indicator of the likely demand for 2017/2018. Martin Sim said that he was considering whether the College's website needed to be modernised. The lack of a further monitoring visit from OfSTED was hindering efforts to prepare marketing as the nature of OfSTED's judgment would necessarily colour the College's message.

The meeting received the marketing update.

F/17/28 Item 8 – General Issues:

There were no matters to report under this category.

F/17/29 Item 9 – Date and Time of next Meeting:

The date and time of the next meeting were confirmed as Thursday 15 June 2017 at 5.30 p.m. at the College.

F/17/30 Item 10 – Any Other Business:

Martin Sim advised the meeting that he had a confidential matter to report.

Shirley Munden withdrew from the meeting. This item is recorded as a confidential minute (F/17/30 (Conf.))