



FINANCE, STAFFING AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting on Thursday 19 January 2017

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

Ref.		Action
F/17/01	<p>Item 1 – Apologies for Absence:</p> <p>The meeting was declared quorate. Robert Mansfield advised the Committee that it should first elect a Chair. Suzanne Overton-Edwards then proposed that Steve Holderness should become Chair and Shirley Munden seconded this. Steve Holderness was elected as Chair of the Committee. There were no apologies for absence.</p>	
F/17/02	<p>Item 2 – Declaration of Interests in Agenda Items:</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest in agenda items.</p>	
F/17/03	<p>Item 3 – Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising:</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting on 1 December 2016 were accepted as an accurate record and were duly signed by Steve Holderness. It was confirmed that the actions set out in the minutes had been taken. There were no other matters arising.</p>	
F/17/04	<p>Item 4 – Estates Issues:</p> <p><i>4.1 Estates Matters</i></p> <p>Hamid Ravat reported that the submission of the Planning Application for the Blackbird Road site to the Planning Committee had been delayed while Sport England decided on the required provision of land for sports. This had now been resolved and it was hoped that the Planning Committee would consider the application in February 2017. There were no other estates matters of significance to report</p> <p><i>The meeting received the report on estates issues.</i></p>	

4.2 Future Accommodation

Hamid Ravat gave a brief oral presentation report on action in response to the Committee's request for a review of options for increasing the physical capacity of the College in the short term. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had concluded, in the light of the EFA's declared intention to cap the College's numbers for 2017/2018 at around the current roll, that the review of options should be deferred. It would also have diverted management time from other priorities. Moreover any development would need to sit comfortably with the outcomes of the Area-Based Review. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that it might be possible to look into the scope for minor improvements.

Steve Holderness pointed out that OfSTED had concluded that the College's expansion had had an adverse effect on the learning experiences of students. Hamid Ravat said that the inspection had taken place early in the term, when there was inevitably more pressure on space. The additional study space created on the mezzanine floor was not at that time fully operational and its intended use was not fully understood by students or staff. The issue of learning space was not currently on the agenda of the Student Executive Team.

Steve Holderness repeated that OfSTED had raised a concern about the matter. He felt that this could hardly be ignored, although he accepted that any major capital development at the current time would be inappropriate. Shirley Munden said that the College was full to capacity and this fostered a mentality on the part of students that there was nowhere to work. There was at times, especially some afternoons when students were waiting for late classes, great pressure on the Street. Naz Mistry said that the number of students returning to re-sit examinations might be expected to reduce in future years, though of course that would create potential vacancies to recruit more new starters. Suzanne Overton-Edwards agreed that, faced with free time between classes, the inclination of many students was to opt for 'social time' on the Street. When she encountered such behaviour she urged them to use such time for their studies, but with limited success.

It was agreed that the College at times lacked space for independent learning rather than classrooms. The Committee asked the SLT to examine what further steps might be taken at minimal cost to increase the learning space available and to report back in May 2017.

The Committee received the oral report and requested that action should be taken as described.

HR

4.3 Health & Safety Statistics

Hamid Ravat presented the health & safety statistics to 10 January 2017. The number of reported incidents to date was running at a somewhat higher level than in the previous year. This was caused by a rise in health-related incidents rather than accidents. There were no concerning trends.

The meeting received the health & safety statistics.

F/17/05 Item 5 – Finance Issues:

5.1 Learner Numbers and Funding 2016/2017

Hamid Ravat presented a report on learner numbers and funding. There had been no changes to the report since it was last considered by the Committee. There was limited scope, on which the College was working, to improve funding values by increasing the sizes of some small student learning programmes. The report suggested that the College's income in 2017/2018 might be about £250K higher than in the current year.

The meeting received the learner numbers and funding report.

5.2 Operating Results 2016/2017

Hamid Ravat presented the operating results to December 2016. In the first five months the College had generated a deficit of £30K, £115K worse than budget. Income had been £7K above budget, there being no significant variances. Pay expenditure had been £112K above budget, mainly attributable to higher teaching staff pay. The variance arose largely because the College had recruited additional staff to cope with the higher number of students. Non-pay expenditure was in total close to budget. Within this there were variances related to seasonal and timing factors. He predicted that the year 2016/2017 would produce an operating deficit of about £200K.

The capital budget had been largely expended, the main items being the Mezzanine Student Study Centre and IT equipment. The cash balance stood at over £2.8 million. This was predicted to fall to £2.2 million by the end of March and then to rise to around £2.7 million at the end of July 2017. He advised Steve Holderness that the college's monies on deposit earned about 0.7% interest, a figure in line with that obtained by other colleges. The KPIs were in the main better than targets. However there was a predicted deficit of around 2% of income, and during the year pay was expected to rise to 73% of income, as compared with the target of 71%.

The meeting received the operating results.

5.3 Bank Loan Covenants Update

Hamid Ravat advised the meeting that the College's 20-year

loan had now reduced to around £1.4 million. The loan had been arranged on the basis of five loan covenants. The College was still compliant with all these covenants. The introduction of FRS102 had adversely affected the College's reported total debt, but this remained well within target. Should the College operate in deficit again in 2017/2018, there would be concern that it might in 2018/2019 breach the fourth covenant (relating to surplus / deficit). Likewise it seemed very possible that there would be a cash outflow in 2016/2017. If this were to be repeated in 2017/2018 – not that this currently seemed probable – there would be a concern that the fifth covenant (relating to operating cash flow) might be breached in 2018/2019. Any breach of covenant would be likely to trigger a renegotiation of the loan on much less favourable terms. He then answered various questions about the terms of the current loan.

The meeting received the report.

5.4 Course Sizes and Programme Efficiencies

James Bagley presented a report on course sizes and programme efficiencies. The number of students enrolled on programmes with below the optimum number of learning hours was currently 240 (an increase of 23 on the figure for 2016/2017, since when the student roll had increased by 93). He explained the reasons, legitimate and otherwise, why students had been enrolled on to small programmes. The College had tried to reduce the numbers where the solution did not involve disproportionate cost, but had had limited success. He believed that there remained modest scope for further reductions. He would resubmit the report in March, when further action had been taken. He explained the root causes of small programmes. Some of these could be addressed by process improvement. However it also appeared that there had been too much readiness to allow reductions in student programmes and sometimes insufficient control over such reductions. Steve Holderness said that the balance between the ethos of the college and performance needed to be improved.

The meeting received this report.

JB

F/17/06 Item 6 – Human Resources Issues:

6.1 Staffing Update

Naz Leivas-Mistry presented the staffing report. He asked the meeting to note that the joiners included three Progress Coaches, one being an additional post to cope with higher student numbers. There were now five members of staff on maternity leave and two on long term sickness absence though he was optimistic that these would soon be returning

to work. The sickness absence figures showed that the absence rate for teaching staff was below the sector but above the sixth form college benchmarks; the rate for corporate staff was better than both benchmarks.

The meeting received the staffing update.

6.2 Staff Survey 2016 Action Plan

Suzanne Overton-Edwards gave an oral update on progress against the staff survey action plan. Targets relating to communications and consultation had generally been met. There was more to do to improve the visibility of the SLT and she had still to produce the next Staff Bulletin. A meeting earlier that day with the Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee had been constructive and had provided grounds to believe that relationships were improving. The staff survey was to be repeated in May.

The meeting noted this report.

F/17/07

Item 7 – Marketing Issues:

7.1 Marketing Plan 2016/2017

James Bagley presented an oral report on progress against the marketing plan for 2016/2017. His report included details of recent media coverage and articles and entries in sector press and *The Quality of Leicester*. There had been an encouraging increase in the College's followership on *Twitter* and a small drop in that on *Facebook*. Interview booklets containing course sheets would be available by 30 January. Information on the website was being comprehensively reviewed, and updated where necessary. The number of alumni had increased again and a meeting had been scheduled with Programme Area Managers to discuss how to make fuller use of alumni to encourage student progression. *Word on the Street* had not been published since June 2016. There were plans to make the magazine more 'for students and about students' and with greater student involvement in creating the content. Work was in hand with several members of staff to initiate student led campaigns to promote and celebrate College successes.

Steve Holderness asked whether the College had a clearly defined strategy for dealing with negative publicity. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that if negative publicity was anticipated brief statements were prepared in advance. Steve Holderness said that there was also a need to reassure parents. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that further effort was required. There had however been negligible fallout from a recent negative report in *The Leicester Mercury*. Naz Leivas-Mistry reported that the Student Executive Team had considered that the article would inflict no more than modest

damage. It was essential for the College to continue to go out to interview prospective students in order to be able to dispel any negativity face-to-face.

The meeting received the marketing update.

F/17/08 Item 8 – General Issues:

8.1 Progress against Strategic Targets 2016/2017

Suzanne Overton-Edwards provided details of the latest progress against the strategic targets subject to scrutiny by the Committee. Much of this had been reported earlier in the meeting. Action on the target relating to holding community events was suspended, while the College focused on quality improvement.

The meeting received this report.

8.2 Harassment Policy

Naz Leivas-Mistry presented the harassment policy. The document set out the College's stance, the aims of the policy, the terminology (including protected characteristics and illustrations) and the processes to be followed in the event of harassment. Steve Holderness asked whether this was a new policy and how the Committee could be assured that the policy was compliant with all the relevant legislative and regulatory requirements. Naz Leivas-Mistry said the policy was a recently updated version of an established policy. The text drew heavily upon models provided by the Association of Colleges and the Sixth Form Colleges Association, the relevant employers' associations.

The meeting commended the harassment policy to the Board for endorsement.

8.3 Data Protection Policy

Hamid Ravat presented the data protection policy. The policy had been subject to very minor revisions only during a scheduled review.

The Committee commended the data protection policy to the Board for endorsement.

F/17/09 Item 9 – Date and Time of next Meeting:

The date and time of the next meeting were confirmed as Tuesday 21 March 2017 at 5.30 p.m. at the College.

F/17/10 Item 10 – Any Other Business:

There was no other business.