

**SOLIHULL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2015 AT THE BLOSSOMFIELD
CAMPUS**

PRESENT: Lena Stockford (Chair)
Stan Baldwin
Chris Baranowski
John Bolt
John Callaghan (Principal)
Joe Kelly
Nick Mapp
Phil Mayhew
Geraldine Swanton
Bill Wanley

IN ATTENDANCE: Lindsey Stewart (Deputy Principal)
Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR & Student Services)
Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)
Beth Selwood (Vice Principal Teaching, Learning and Assessment)
Theresa Lynch (Clerk to the Corporation)
Patrick Geary (Director for Quality Improvement) *Items 5 and 6 only.*

Welcome was expressed to Geraldine Swanton, as this was her first Corporation meeting.

1. Membership

1.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Jane Coleman, Lucy Lee, Keith Marriott and Alex Palethorpe.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

Phil Mayhew raised his conflict of interest for item 8.2 with regard to property.
Geraldine Swanton raised her potential interest with regarding to item 3.2 with regard to legal advice provided for the Student Union from Shakespeare Martineau LLP.

John Bolt left the meeting during the election for the Vice-Chair.

1.3 Election of Vice-Chair

The Chair requested nominations for the role of Vice-Chair and explained that one proposal had been circulated. This proposal related to John Bolt being nominated for election outlining his extensive experience in the FE sector, particularly in data analysis and his knowledge of the funding environment. During 2015/16 it was felt that this expertise would be valuable in supporting the Chair and Principal during the Area Review and the action plan that would be produced.

There were no further nominations.

It was **agreed** to appoint John Bolt as Vice Chair, with immediate effect for the rest of the academic year 2015/16.

The Chair thanked Phil Mayhew and Bill Wanley for their contribution in acting as Joint Vice Chairs, particularly for their support and input during her leave of absence.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 7th July 2015 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th July 2015 were **agreed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Confidential Items:

There were no confidential items.

3. Principal's Report – matters arising since the last meeting

3.1 Sub-contracting Partners for approval and ratification of the Supply-Chain Fees and Charges Policy 2015-16

The Deputy Principal presented the sub-contracting report. She explained that the Supply-Chain Fees and Charges Policy for 2015-16 had been amended to incorporate changes outlined by the SFA in the financial memorandum. The Chair had ~~amended~~ approved the Policy, so that the award of contracts would not be delayed.

Discussion took place regarding the approval process for contracting with sub-contracting partners and it was confirmed that Corporation approval was only required for contracts over £100k. It was acknowledged that approval was required prior to procurement, but that contractual approval would be by exception or over the limit set in financial regulation 10.2.3, as long as, arrangements were in line with the Sub-contracting Strategy and Plan for the year.

RESOLVED to approve the revised Sub-contracting Plan, which includes contracting with Creative Alliance and the Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals (CIPP), and to ratify the Supply-Chain Fees and Charges Policy for 2015/16.

3.2 Student Union Proposal Update

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the report and explained that following the expert group meeting that took place on 16th September 2015, it had been decided to reinforce the student voice structures currently in place in the College, rather than pursue a full student union. Legal advice had indicated that it was not possible to maintain the levels of internal controls required by the College, whilst also providing a semi-autonomous student union, and the constitution would therefore be contrary to charity legislation.

It was noted that there was no pressure from students to have a student union and that the present arrangements would accommodate QAA requirements. It was anticipated that the current arrangements would be further enhanced by appointing a paid student representative office and continuing to strengthen student representation and voice within the College. It was **agreed** that this was an appropriate approach and that a full student union would not be established.

3.3 Achievement 2014/15 Initial Data

The Deputy Principal Finance presented the current data relating to achievement for 2014/15.

Q. The predicted outcome for 2014/15 is higher than the actual – why is this the case?

A. There were still some outcomes to be included and it is hoped that this will bring the total in line with the predicted values identified. The Deputy Principal explained that 31st July used to be a cut-off point for recording achievement. There was now, however, more elasticity around completion, which provided an opportunity to continue assigning achievements to the year in which the qualification was studied. It also allows students on English and maths who do not achieve a C or above, but who continue studying at the College to remain on the programme for retakes, rather than show as a 'fail'.

Discussion took place regarding the legitimacy of doing this and it was confirmed that the EFA had written to the College to confirm that this approach was appropriate. The governor with special interest for funding and data had discussed this with the Deputy Principal and had been assured that this was within the EFA guidance for recording achievement.

Q. There did seem to be some ambiguity around completion and HE had had a similar issue that had raised concern.

A. The EFA had now confirmed this approach and it was being applied with caution. It was understood that some colleges were applying this to a high number of students.

Q. What does the calculation for success rates include?

A. Success rates are the number that achieved divided by those that started after the funding qualification period (6 weeks for substantial programmes).

The Deputy Principal explained that level 3 success rates were very good, however, there was concern regarding level 1 and entry level success rates. This issue was being explored to establish why this was the case and what actions were required to address it.

Q. Are the issues with regard to the course, intake or teaching?

A. A review is taking place regarding the qualifications and the programme delivery, as well as, the suitability of the courses for learners. It may be necessary to review curriculum design.

Q. How many people who start at entry/level 1 progress within the College or leave?

A. Some progress and some progress externally/get jobs – there is good progression within the College. About 20% neither progress internally or get jobs, so there needs to be some focus on this area too.

Areas of concern were highlighted. These included Hair, Beauty and Visual Arts.

Q. Hair and Beauty was an area for concern last year. Have the structural changes, put in place last year, had any impact?

A. The Head of School was appointed in December 2014 and had a number of issues to resolve. She has now settled in to her role and has appointed some strong co-ordinators, so it is hoped that her impact will really start to be displayed. Some courses are back in intensive care and EMT members are working with programme leads to resolve issues. Student recruitment numbers have been reduced for 2015/16 and a more selective approach taken to ensure the right students are on the right course and are more likely to succeed.

Q. How long will this situation be given to improve before further action is required?

A. There has been improvement already, but it is hoped that the extensive changes put in place since December 2014 and for recruitment in September 2015, will really impact on the 2015/16 academic year. The situation will continue to be closely monitored and reported to governors. It was noted that having Hair and Beauty at the Woodlands campus was particularly important because it not only provides an excellent opportunity to many young people in the community, who do achieve their qualification, but also diversifies their student population too, as the provision on that campus tends to attract more male students.

Q. In 2014/15 Early Years was raising concerns – how are things going now?

A. There had been improvement in Early Years and the area was no longer a cause for concern.

Discussion took place regarding the plan to cease offering level 2 Functional Skills (apart from in Health and Social Care), as this did not seem to be attractive to students.

4. Area Review Discussion

The Chair and the Principal provided an update on the process and discussions in relation to the Area Review for Greater Birmingham and Solihull and detailed discussion took place.

Q. Is the College measuring outcomes for students?

A. Yes, this was gaining more prominence as a performance indicator. It is, however, quite difficult to obtain the data because it is often necessary to establish outcomes sometime after leaving the College and often students do not respond or are not possible to contact. As this indicator gathers more importance alternative ways of obtaining the data through NI records etc may be needed.

Q. What will the Corporation be required to do – what is the objective?

A. The Area Review process is evolving. At the current time work is taking place to clarify comparable data between the colleges involved to inform curriculum planning and student behaviour. Further, it is anticipated that an objective of the review will be for all colleges involved to make some contribution to collective financial savings and efficiency gains, irrespective of their current financial health. There may be more information after the spending review in November.

It was noted that it will be really important for colleges and the Area Review team to have accurate and adequate information to make an informed decision at the end of the process.

Q. It is important not to be passive about possible outcomes for the College. If there are outcomes that would be preferred, it is important to pursue these.

A. Each Corporation is being treated as an independent body and any outcome will therefore require the Corporation's approval, so if colleges are against our preferred option(s) it may be difficult to move it forward.

It was noted that it should be acknowledged that some students will not travel for study. The Woodlands campus serves such a population – for many of the Woodlands students, they may not be willing to travel to study. It will therefore be important not to assume complete flexibility from potential students.

Q. What is the timescale for implementation of Area Review outcomes?

A. The action plan will be produced early in 2016 and it is anticipated that some changes will be in place for the academic year 2016/17, however, dependant on the extent of change, there may be a phased implementation.

The Principal explained that during the process, so far, there had been some useful discussions about pooling resources with local colleges and any changes that enhanced provision for the wider community, whilst making savings, were welcomed. Areas like marketing and support for e-learning were 2 examples where there could be cost-effective collaboration.

Q. The funding cuts that are likely to occur will probably limit the amount of choices colleges will have and it is important to embrace this concept.

A. Adult Skills Budget, in particular, is likely to be severely cut and this will impact on some colleges hard. Solihull College provision is relatively safely spread between income streams and so, although cuts will impact, the College is relatively well positioned to respond to change.

The Clerk explained that updates would be provided at each Corporation meeting during the autumn term, but that there would also need to be an additional meeting early in December to consider the emerging messages from the Area Review and the outcome of the spending review. A report would be produced by the Area Review team early in December and Corporations would be required to communicate their decisions by 27th January 2016, so arrangements would be made to ensure comprehensive discussion and consideration of the Area Review and Comprehensive Spending Review (25th November) outcomes.

5. Ofsted Update

5.1 Ofsted Framework Briefing

The Vice Principal Teaching, Learning and Assessment and the Director of Quality Improvement presented changes to the Ofsted CIF introduced in September 2015.

It was noted that the key judgements would now be:

- Effectiveness of leadership and management;
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment;
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare;
- Outcomes for learners.

All key judgement areas will need to be a 2 or above to achieve an overall Good.

As well as the key judgements, safeguarding, will also be assessed as 'effective' or 'not effective' and if found to be not effective would limit the ability of the College to achieve a Grade 2, Good overall.

Discussion took place regarding the timing of short inspections for 'Good' or 'Outstanding' colleges and it was noted that the College's re-inspection would be a full inspection.

Q. What will be required in terms of safeguarding?

A. The inspectors will look for the same kinds of examples as before, including safety of students, safe environment, PREVENT implementation, issues like bullying or harassment and how safeguarding is secured through the organisation.

Staff roles in the new inspection framework were discussed and it was noted that there would still be a college nominee, but leads for each type of provision would be required, rather than subject-specialist area leads, as in the past.

The Vice Principal Teaching, Learning and Assessment explained that equality and diversity would also run through all key judgement areas, the emphasis would be on current students, rather than focussing on previous cohorts and that the impact of governance was key.

Q. Would there be a focus on governance, as the message during the previous inspection was that governance was not a key area?

A. In the new framework governance is very important in terms of leadership and management, but the focus needs to be on the impact made by governors, rather than on governance structures etc.

Q. What will be the notice period for inspection?

A. This will still be 2 days.

5.2 Ofsted Action Plan – Quality Improvement Plan Update

The Vice Principal Teaching, Learning and Assessment provided an update on progress relating to the Ofsted Action Plan – Quality Improvement Plan. She explained that in line with a request from governors, there were now two RAG columns. One relates to progress against the action and the second column relates to the impact of that action.

Outcomes:

The Vice Principal Teaching, Learning and Assessment explained that success rates were improving and that the intensive care approach for specific programmes seemed to be having an effect. She confirmed that the outcomes for 2015/16 would be reviewed and subsequent actions incorporated into the QIP.

English and maths:

The Vice Principal Teaching, Learning and Assessment explained that there were about 1,000 students on each of GCSE English and maths. New staff were being recruited. The governor with special interest for English and maths had visited to discuss progress to date. It was noted that the English and maths zone would be split to focus on each subject, that staff would go out in to vocational areas to support delivery of English and maths and that timetabling had been reviewed to address student concerns and encourage attendance.

Work Experience:

The Vice Principal Teaching, Learning and Assessment explained that there are some strong areas offering work experience as part of their curriculum. Business sales staff were now working to

increase work experience placement opportunities. Students had been given log books to record all elements of work experience that they undertake during their programmes of study.

Q. During the inspections the message was that inspectors wanted to see every student undertaking work experience. How realistic is this?

A. It would appear that the message has been moderated and there is an element of 'where work experience is appropriate' rather than full coverage. Whilst external work placements are the ideal, there is acknowledgement that internal arrangements are useful too. There is also more engagement with destinations of students, so where students are aiming for further study, more diverse work-related opportunities may be appropriate.

Q. Will there be training for staff who will lead the Ofsted provision areas?

A. Yes, this will be important and will be incorporated into the QIP/Action Plan. **ACTION.**

In terms of providing training, this will be put in place, however, it will be necessary to ensure the correct messages are being given, so it will be informed by inspection reports as they are produced.

It was noted that Russell Jordan, the Support and Challenge HMI would be coming to College to meet with governors on Thursday 22nd October at 6pm.

6. **Quality Improvement Strategy**

The Vice Principal Teaching, Learning and Assessment presented the Quality Improvement Strategy and explained that a suite of programmes had been put in place to underpin quality processes. These IT programmes would gather data and evidence to demonstrate action being taken.

Q. How have staff embraced the suite of IT programmes?

A. Generally well and development opportunities have been available to support staff in using the new software.

Q. Will the software be able to show how many staff have development plans and how many are complete etc?

A. Yes, it will be possible to report activity.

The Principal explained that the quality quadrant was being developed to incorporate this type of data.

Discussion took place regarding courses in intensive care and it was confirmed that of 18 in 2014/15, only 3 remained a concern. However, it was noted that a further 15 were raising concern at the start of the new academic year. One reason for this was that the indicators raising concerns had changed and were increasingly sensitive, ie any course on or just below benchmark now raised concern and issues around survey responses and other indicators were also being included.

RESOLVED to approve the Quality Improvement Strategy for 2015/16.

7. **Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 29th September 2015**

The Chair of the Committee presented the minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2015.

7.1 Membership Report

The Chair presented the report and recommended the following re-appointments/appointments:

RESOLVED to approve the following (re)appointments:

- Extension to **Chris Baranowski's** membership to July 2016 to allow completion of the current financial year.
- A further 2 year term of office to April 2018, for **Jane Coleman**.
- **John Bolt** be appointed as a member and as Chair of the Audit Committee from 1st January 2016 until the end of his term of office (April 2018).

8. Principal's Report – confidential items

8.1 International Update

This item was deemed confidential.

8.2 Property Update

This item was deemed confidential due to potential commercial sensitivity.

9. Minutes of the Remuneration Committee meeting held on 29th September 2015

9.1 Principals' Targets

The Chair presented the recommended targets for the Principal for 2015/16 and some amendments were recommended:

- Continue to improve student performance, results, satisfaction and progression to further study or work
- Ensure Maintain financial viability
- Re-model curriculum offer to respond to sectorial needs to reflect the changing FE environment
- Retain and attract talented staff
- Obtain at least 'Good' from Ofsted
- Keep abreast of future external developments
- Increase influence in Solihull and the region, including active participation in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Area Review
- Facilitate EMT to achieve the annual priorities (see appendix 1) - these identify the SMART targets that underpin measurement of the performance of the Principal.

9.2 Clerk's Targets

The Chair presented the recommended targets for the Clerk for 2015/16:

- **Effective reporting** – ensure the Corporation is well informed, particularly in relation to the Area Review, but also generally, in terms of refining and improving the content of reports. The Clerk explained that she had invited the internal auditors to undertake a 2-stage audit for reporting, with an advisory audit at the beginning of the academic year and a compliance audit towards the end to improve reporting, whilst observing statutory requirements.
- **Enhancement of Governors' SAR** – the Governors' SAR would incorporate a review of the English Colleges Code of Good Governance and input from governors through questionnaires and 1:1 meetings with the Chair. The SAR and QIP for Governors would be provided to Corporation in December 2015.
- **Charity Law CPD** – the Clerk had expressed a wish to improve her confidence with regard to charity law further, through establishing CPD opportunities.

RESOLVED to approve the targets for the Principal and

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

10. Expert Group Feedback

10.1 Notes of the Student Union Group meeting held on 16th September 2015 (see item 3.2 above) – the contents of the notes were received for information.

10.2 Notes of the Members' Report Review meeting held on 16th September 2015 – the contents of the notes were received for information.

11. Updates for Information

11.1 Health and Safety Update – the Vice Principal Finance requested feedback on the content of the Health and Safety report. It was noted that this item should be above the line for future meetings.
ACTION.

11.2 Bids and Projects – the contents of the report were received for information.

12. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 20th October 2015.

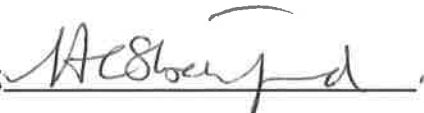
A meeting of the Audit Committee will take place at 6pm and only Audit Committee members need attend and a meeting of the full Corporation will take place at 7pm.

13. Background Documentation

Item 13.1 Ofsted FE and Skills Handbook - Relating to Item 5.1 above

Item 13.2 Strategic Plan – September 2015, incorporating information from Financial Plan approved in July 2015

Item 13.3 Finance PMR June 2015

Signed: 

Date: 20 October 2015.