



GOVERNORS' MEETING

Minutes of the meeting on 22 May 2014

Present: Miss Katie Baker, Ms Michelle Balcombe, Mr Charles Davies, Mr Rob Doran, Dr Jonathan Godfrey, Mr Joe Hamblin, Mr Clive Hodgeman, Mr Chris Hodson, Dr Ken Hopkins (Chair), Mrs Heidi Macdougall, Mr James Miller, Ms Blair Priday, Dr Amber Tahir, Mr Ravi Tandon, Miss Christine Wright
(15)

In attendance: Mr Robert Gorman (Clerk), Ms Sally-Anne Griffiths (Finance Director)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr Neil Arlett, Mrs Carol Clapham, Mr Peter Cooper (Deputy Principal), Mrs Diane Evans, Mr Phil Tranter
(4)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND GIFTS

None

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 MARCH 2014

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising. The Chair made a special statement to thank everyone for their kindness and messages of sympathy on the death of his son. The Chair went on to congratulate the Principal and all concerned on the successful bid for grant funding of £773k for the Front of College project, and to welcome new Finance Director, Sally-Anne Griffiths, to the College, and her first HSFC Governors' meeting.

5. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk read aloud a note from Ruth Jones, previous Finance Director, thanking Governors for the garden gift vouchers presented to her on her retirement.

The Clerk circulated an assessment questionnaire to Governors for completion by 3 July, indicating the Assessment of Board and Committee meetings, Effectiveness and Circulated Papers, would help to critically assess the quality of governance processes. A Governors' skills audit and training needs questionnaire was planned early in the new academic year, and a governance self-assessment performance review would follow later in the year.

The Clerk requested the Chair to take the Search Committee report early in the agenda, in view of the item to re-appoint a member to the Board.

Heidi Macdougall left the meeting at this point.

10. COMMITTEE REPORT

(i) Search Committee on 27 March

The Chair, before asking the Committee Chair to outline the remaining committee business, put forward the Search Committee's recommendation that Heidi Macdougall be re-appointed as governor for a further four-year term. All were in favour, and the **BOARD AGREED** to **APPROVE** the re-appointment. The Chair also asked that the Board confirm the appointments of two co-opted members: Mrs Shirley Tulley to Finance and Premises Committee, and Dr Marion Hawkins to Audit Committee. The **BOARD CONFIRMED** both appointments.

Heidi Macdougall returned to the meeting at this point

The Committee Chair then outlined the remaining business of the Committee focussing on the issues of re-appointment of governors, skills brought to the Board by governors and succession planning. The Board **NOTED** the pinch point in Governors' retirements in 2016/17, and the need to balance experience with fresh ideas in appointments. Neil Arlett had indicated his intention to retire when his term of office ends in October. The Committee had also reviewed its Terms of Reference and recommended no amendments which, after a brief discussion, the Board of Governors **AGREED TO ADOPT**.

The Committee's Minutes were then considered and **APPROVED AS A CORRECT RECORD**

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal reported on staffing, students' National Youth Theatre successes, quality assurance and national issues, indicating that accommodation and the proposed new build would be taken as a separate item later in the meeting.

Five students have gained places with the National Youth Theatre. The Board was impressed by the large number of successes and wished the Head of Drama to be congratulated.

The latest attendance and retention data remained very good, and the responses to the internal Student Questionnaire were very positive. The Chair was concerned at the stubbornly low satisfaction as to availability of computers. The Principal confirmed that this referred to the heavy use of computers in communal areas, and that computers were available in classrooms for general use, when rooms were free. This would be followed up, in order that computers should not be 'trapped' in classrooms. Issues around printing capacity were also being followed up. Students were asked to complete the on-line OfSTED Learner View questionnaire, as well as the College's questionnaire, and against the data for other high-performing colleges HSFC compared very well.

The Principal circulated a copy of the College's data downloaded from the new Data Dashboard on the OfSTED website, only recently made available. A college's data could be viewed in charts and reports for achievements at different qualification levels that learners planned to complete in 2012/13, showing increase/decrease over the previous year, and demonstrating value added. A further section, Questions for governors, is meant to prompt governors to ask challenging questions regarding the college's performance data. The Principal circulated further schedules showing data extracted from the Data Dashboard for more than forty SFCs including HSFC. In relation to Value Added Scores for A level, based on 2012/13 results, HSFC was shown in joint fourth position. Following some discussion, the Board **NOTED** the Report.

The Principal circulated a Calendar of Governors' meetings and Committee meetings for the new academic year. Following discussion, the Calendar of Meetings and Business was **ADOPTED**.

7. REVIEW OF GOVERNORS' CONFERENCE ON 14/15 MARCH 2014

All aspects of the conference and the Governors' Meeting included were felt in the most part to be 'very useful', with the exception of the guest speaker at dinner.

8. UPDATE ON REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE PROCEDURES

The Clerk confirmed that revision of the Governors' Handbook was well underway, and targeted, together with the revision of the Governance Procedures, for completion to coincide with the new College website.

9. NOTIFICATION OF THE ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

The Clerk notified the Board that the election of the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors for 2014-15 will take place at the next Board meeting in July, and that the current Chair and Vice Chair were both eligible to stand for election.

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

ii. Staff & Students Committee on 6 May

The President of the Students' Representative Council had given the Committee an excellent report on the Council's activities. These included fundraising events for Children in Need, which had raised £1010. The SRC had worked on a number of projects to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the College. The Principal stated that various commemorative items, including mugs and ties, were available to purchase.

The Committee had also received updates on staffing and national negotiations on pay and conditions. The Principal confirmed that the negotiating position remained the same as reported in the minutes. In response to a member's question as to the attitude of College staff towards the proposed PRP scheme, The Principal indicated that this was a national solution for localised problems, and felt that the College had sufficiently robust procedures in place to deal with issues already.

The Committee had reviewed its Terms of Reference and recommended no amendments which, after a brief discussion, the Board of Governors **AGREED TO ADOPT**.

The Committee's Minutes were then considered and **APPROVED AS A CORRECT RECORD**

iii. Finance & Premises Committee on 8 May

The Committee Chair outlined the business of the meeting, and the discussion of the Monthly Management Accounts for March. The new Finance Director had reported the College's finances as being in a buoyant position. The Committee had also discussed the Fees and Charges Policy and recommended no changes.

In response to a request from the Chair to comment on any observations on College finances to date, the new Finance Director stated that she had found a robust financial position supported by stable student numbers.

After a brief discussion, the Board **AGREED TO APPROVE** the

- Monthly Management Accounts for March 2014
- Fees & Charges Policy and Procedures 2014-15 with no changes

The Committee's Minutes were then considered and **APPROVED AS A CORRECT RECORD**

NEW BUILD PROJECT

The Principal presented a paper outlining the financing implications for the proposed Front of College extension, together with drawings, reminding governors that the new build was to be a rectangular block replacing the current reception space and extending forwards to be level with the existing Science block. A revised internal scheme would mean more study space adjacent to the existing library, and the Bridge Café will extend into the new

first floor. Current cost estimate is £1m to £1.3m including VAT, but not including a second phase of the project to clad the Bridge and Science blocks to unify the façade. Grant funding of £774k from the EFA had been confirmed, leaving the College contribution as £225k to £526k. Options are:

- review specification to reduce cost
- finance the balance from cash reserves or borrowing

The plan was to commence the project in June for completion within 12 months. Principal went to indicate that the Sports Hall extension, to provide additional classrooms and office space, was planned and costed some time ago, and would need revisiting. Estimated costs of £300k to £420k including VAT would need to be met by cash reserves or borrowings, with no grant funding available to support. It was hoped that construction costs might be lower, once tendered, as the contractor could undertake both projects at the time. The same options applied.

The Finance Director confirmed that going ahead with both projects simultaneously could cost the College £946k in the worst case. The College's bankers had been asked to provide figures for a loan over 5 years for £500k, £750k and £1m. Responses were awaited. At an interest rate of 5%, interest and charges on £500k would be in the region of £66k over 5 years. A loan of £500k to £1m would reduce Net Current Assets resulting in a possible reduction in the College's financial health grade from Outstanding to Good or Satisfactory. The College's sound financial position, with investment balances of £2.1m, meant that the scheme was affordable without borrowings, and the College would still be rated as financial health grade Good.

The Board spent a substantial amount of time considering the projects. A member questioned the adequacy of lift provision in the Front of College project as the existing lift was well used. The question of split floor levels within the blocks involved was discussed. A member suggested the inclusion of a platform lift. The Principal undertook to discuss these issues with the Estates Manager and College's architect, including the possible provision of a platform lift.

In response to a member's question, The Principal confirmed that staff had been consulted about the project and new internal arrangements.

Michelle Balcombe left the meeting at this point.

A member expressed the view that with investment returns currently at very low rates, and with concern about falling rolls in the medium term, the College could spend from cash reserves and take a view on the additional projects, if undertaking them simultaneously was cost efficient. The Chair felt that to match the £776k grant with £750k from cash reserves would not cause anxiety, and the Sports Hall project could be the subject of a further application. Two members observed that borrowing to build was relatively easy at present, and advocated leaving reserves intact for the future. The Finance Director indicated that College borrowing could be at about 3% interest.

The Chair, in summarising the discussion, indicated that the key argument in favour of the Front of College Extension is the urgent need for the additional accommodation it would provide including new areas for Finance and Careers and extensions to Cafeteria and student social space especially. The Board of Governors then **AGREED TO GIVE ITS CONSENT** for the project to extend the Front of College up to a total cost £1.5 million (including VAT), to be

financed by grant of £776k with the balance from College cash reserves. It was further **AGREED** that the College proceed with the tendering process, progressing the Sports Hall project at the same time, and the Principal to further update the Board at the next meeting.

iv. Curriculum Committee on 8 May

The Committee had reviewed its Terms of Reference and recommended no changes. The College's Curriculum Policy & Procedures had also been reviewed with only minor changes recommended. Attendance and retention data had been considered and described as quite outstanding. In relation to the student cross-college and course questionnaires, student responses continue to be very positive.

The Board of Governors discussed the Committee's Report and then **AGREED TO APPROVE**

- the Curriculum Committee's Terms of Reference with no changes
- the College's Curriculum Policy & Procedures with minor changes

The Committee's Minutes were also considered and **APPROVED AS A CORRECT RECORD**

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 3 July 2014, at 7.30pm