

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation [CORP0708-6]

held on Monday 21 July 2008 in Room H201

Action

Present:

Guy Adams	Chair, Foundation Member	Peter Avery	Principal
David Wood	Foundation Member	Hollie King	
Tim Davison	Foundation Member	John Rudge	
Paul Grant	Parent Member	Garry Charles	
John Peart	Student Member	John Lockwood	
Mary Tighe		Rosemary Viant	

In Attendance:

Millie Smyth	President of Student Council (for item 1 of the main agenda)	Jane Scott	Clerk to the Corporation
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The meeting opened at 5.34 pm and was quorate throughout.

PART 1 : MEETING FORMALITIES**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from the Mayor of Taunton Deane (Honorary Member); Tim Davison (Foundation Member); Ann Helsby; Penny James; Dominic Lynch; Alison Mackenzie (Staff Member); Matt Mears (Student Member); Rob Setchell (Staff Member); Gill Turner (Foundation Member).

2. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of financial interest in the business of the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Meetings held on 19 May 2008 (CORP0708-5)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed.

4. Matters Arising

Reference CORP0708-5/II/3, the matter will be discussed as part of agenda item during the current meeting.

Reference CORP0708-5/II/2, the matter is an agenda item for the current meeting.

Reference CORP0708-5/II/4(d), the matter will be reviewed during August 2008 at the time of the annual review of insurance.

There were no other matters arising which are not dealt with under the business for the current meeting.

PART II: ISSUES FOR THE CURRENT MEETING

1. **The Student Council: Moving Forward**

The President of the Student Council and the Student Governor delivered a presentation relating to activities of the Student Council since the current officers had taken up their appointments earlier in the year. Significant steps had been taken to set up and maintain a web site for the Council. The web site was proving an efficient way of ensuring that all students have an opportunity to keep abreast of Student Council issues and will ensure the longer term continuity of the work of the Student Council.

Key issues currently being considered by the Student Council include efforts to raise the profile of the Council to all students within the College; the possible appointment of a sabbatical officer to undertake presidency duties; raising additional funds through the promotion of the NUS extra card; and revision of the constitution. There is a mandatory requirement for approval of the latter by the Corporation. Work is currently underway to revise and update the constitution and this is being done through wide consultation exercises within the College and following national Student Union guidance. The revised constitution will be presented to the Corporation for its approval in due course.

Members were warmly appreciative of the work which the Student Council is undertaking and for the insight which the officers were able to give.

2. **The College Bid for Capital Funding**

Work associated with preparation of the bid for capital funding has slowed pending the obligatory appointment of a project manager. Current Learning and Skills Council (LSC) rules require that projects in excess of £5m should be managed by an external project manager party to the list of the Journal of the European Union. A selection panel is due to be convened on 7 August for the appointment, and a governor representative will be included in its membership.

Full planning consents have been received in respect of 48 South Road, and it is anticipated that invitations to tender for works to be carried out will proceed during August, with work commencing as soon as possible thereafter.

3. **Moving to More Sustainable Governance**

Following discussion at the previous meeting of the Corporation, a number of members of the Corporation had briefly trialled the tablet computer which it was considered might serve to facilitate more effective conduct of Corporation business and promote a more environmentally friendly ethos. Members were unanimous in their view that the trials had been positive and that the proposed method of dissemination of paperwork would considerably contribute to the overall efficiency and 'green' credentials of the Corporation. The tablet computer was also receiving a practical trial during the current meeting. One very obvious issue was the battery life of the computer in respect of duration of meetings. It was agreed that this matter should be given further investigation. In general, there was consensus that the move to electronic dissemination of Corporation business is desirable, but that the costs involved are considerable. Further investigative work will be done in association with overall purchasing costs. Members will give the matter further consideration when further/fresh information is available.

Action: *Clerk to Corporation to investigate further options in association with tablet computers. Matter to be referred to subsequent meeting of the Corporation.*

4. **The College Development Plan for the Learning and Skills Council**

It was noted that there is no longer an LSC requirement for the Corporation to formally approve a Development Plan for the College. However, the Plan is a significant document in terms of the strategic development of the College and input from members of the Corporation is pivotal to ensuring that the document accurately reflects strategic and other forward planning issues. Members will have further opportunity to significantly contribute to the planning document in the coming period.

5. Items for Approval

(a) Reappointment of Member

The Search Committee had made a recommendation for the re-appointment of Guy Adams as a Foundation Member of the Corporation. The current meeting was of the consensus that Guy contributes very significantly to the value of the work of the Corporation, both through his professional expertise and his willingness to be involved with every aspect of the work. David Wood proposed the re-appointment of Guy Adams as a Foundation member of the Corporation. This was seconded by Jef Collingwood and agreed *nem con*.

(b) Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporation for 2008-09

Members noted the excellent work which Guy Adams has done in his capacity as Chair of the Corporation, and the significant input which he gives to all aspects of governance work at the College. David Wood proposed his re-election as Chair of the Corporation for 2008-09. This was seconded by John Rudge and agreed *nem con*.

Members also noted the significant contribution and input which David Wood gives to the Corporation. His experience is invaluable, and he is unstinting with his sound advice. Guy Adams proposed the re-election of David Wood as Vice Chair of the Corporation for 2008-09. This was seconded by John Rudge and agreed *nem con*.

(c) The Indicative Income and Expenditure Budget for 2008-09

Members noted that through prudent and careful preparation of the budget there is an anticipated small surplus. Expenditure will be stringently controlled, with little potential for flexibility during the budgetary period. Members were mindful of the reduction in the allocation of funding associated with Additional Learner Support, considered that the situation was reprehensible, and that the net result would be an impairment of the progress of individual students. Support Services will bear the burden of this situation. It was agreed that the Corporation will make formal representations to the LSC and the local MP about the allocation of Additional Learner Support funding.

Action: Clerk to Corporation to prepare letters to LSC and MP making representations about funding allocation.

Mary Tighe proposed approval of the Indicative Income and Expenditure Budget for 2008/09. This was seconded by John Rudge and agreed *nem con*.

(d) Tendering Processes

Telephone System

Although the tender for installation of a new telephone system had been given previous approval, members noted the annual costs involved. David Wood proposed approval of the annual costs of the installation. This was seconded by John Rudge and agreed *nem con*.

Catering Services

Aramark was successful in its tender to provide catering services to the College with immediate effect. The contract will be on the basis of no cost to the College and it is understood that there will be significant investment in the catering facilities and considerably improved provision.

Cleaning Contractors

The cleaning contract is currently subject to official tendering processes and the outcome will be reported to the Corporation in due course.

Energy Saving Measures

The College has carried out extensive work to ensure that energy savings can be made during the longer term. Costs associated with these measures are in the sum of £155,966 and in order to ensure that the net cost to the College is nil, there have been some virements of expenditure. The shortfall of £34,823 after receipt of grant will be funded by the virements.

Mary Tighe proposed that the virements be approved. This was seconded by John Rudge and agreed *nem con*.

Photocopying and Printing Services

The tender process for photocopying and printing services had resulted in a programme of up-grade and improvement which will significantly improve services at the College and achieve substantial economies. Paul Grant proposed approval of the appointment of Ricoh as contractors for photocopying and printing services. This was seconded by John Rudge and agreed *nem con*.

(e) The Risk Management Action Plan

It was noted that the Risk Management Action Plan is a dynamic document which is constantly subject to review and amendment in the light of changes and developments affecting the College.

Mary Tighe proposed approval of the Risk Management Action Plan. This was seconded by John Rudge and agreed *nem con*.

(f) Draft Audit Plan for 2008-09

RSM Bentley Jennison had been proactive in providing a strategic audit plan which took into account a number of changes and developments affecting or likely to affect the College over the coming period. Members were confident that the audit plan would ensure appropriate monitoring and identification of the risks and pitfalls associated with some of these changes. John Lockwood proposed approval of the Audit Plan for 2008-09. This was seconded by David Wood and agreed *nem con*.

(g) Fees for External Audit Services

Members considered the fee associated with external audit service work to be reasonable. Paul Grant proposed approval of the fee. This was seconded by Mary Tighe and agreed *nem con*.

(h) Timetable for Preparation of Members' Report and Annual Financial Statements

The timetable follows the format which had been tried and tested during recent years and which had proven effective in expediting business. Garry Charles proposed approval of the timetable. This was seconded by David Wood and agreed *nem con*.

(i) The Child Protection Policy

Members noted the recent strengthening of the Policy by inclusion of a definition of a child, and the naming of a safeguarding team. Jef Collingwood proposed approval of the Policy. This was seconded by Rosemary Viant and agreed *nem con*.

(j) The Diversity and Equality Policy

Members noted that the scope of the Policy has been made explicit so as to cover all students/staff involved in all College activities. The Policy was proposed for approval by Hollie King, seconded by David Wood, and agreed *nem con*.

(k) Terms of Reference of the Committees of the Corporation

Members noted the amendment relating to the membership of the Academic Planning and Quality Committee and that *as far as possible* the membership should include Student and Parent members. Mary Tighe proposed approval of the amendment. This was seconded by Rosemary Viant and agreed *nem con*.

(l) Standing Orders of the Corporation

Members noted the new provision in section 15.1 relating to the publication of members' names in minutes of meetings published on the College website. This amendment was recommended for approval by John Rudge, seconded by Mary Tighe and agreed *nem con*.

(m) Governance Calendar for 2008-09

The draft calendar had passed through all the Committees of the Corporation for consideration in the light of the different requirements of individual Committees. David Wood recommended approval of the Governance Calendar for 2008-09. This was seconded by Paul Grant and agreed *nem con*.

6. Reports from Committees

Academic Planning and Quality Committee

Members noted that progress with implementation of the Framework for Excellence is on-going. The Framework will also apply to school sixth forms in due course. Maximisation of the College score under the provision of the Framework will ensure that the College is in a good position generally. The Sixth Form Colleges Forum is proposing removal of the section relating to employer engagement.

Audit Committee

Members noted that there are a small number of issues outstanding as a result of internal auditing. Work on Financial Regulations and Procedures forms a significant part of the early work of the new Director of Finance, and progress is already being made. In relation to Fixed Asset Tracking, two governors participate in discussion aimed at making significant progress with this matter. Additional work is to be done in relation to Performance Indicators for IT Service Provision. All outstanding issues will continue to be monitored by the Committee.

Finance and General Purposes Committee

Management accounts for the current year are on track to demonstrate a healthy cash flow. The Chair of the Committee has experienced a number of practical difficulties associated with attendance at meetings of the Corporation. However, regular briefing sessions have been instigated between the Chair of the Finance Committee and the Principal to ensure that there is every opportunity for full discussion of issues in a timely and appropriate manner. Members noted that the Chair's experience and expertise continues to be of very significant value to the work of the Corporation and that briefing meetings will ensure full continuity of discussion and underpinning of recommendations made to the Corporation through the Committee.

Foundation Trustees

Members noted the recent transfer of funds from the Foundation accounts to the College and were reminded that the forthcoming year may not prove so fruitful in terms of funds available. Members noted that information about Foundation activity is not currently included in the materials on the College web site, and that further consideration will be given to this matter by the Foundation Trustees.

Personnel Committee

The Director of Finance has now taken up his appointment and a full induction programme is in progress, alongside a handover period with the current Finance Manager.

Due to changes in provision of funding for the teaching of Key Skills, it has been necessary to implement the Redundancy Procedure in respect of Key Skills provision. The matter will be fully reported under an item of Closed Business.

The Personnel Director is currently working on the procedures associated with the dismissal of Senior Postholders, improving and updating those already used by the College.

The current completion rate of Professional Review and Development interviews is 82%, demonstrating a marked improvement on the same period last year.

Search Committee

The Committee had given consideration to the introduction of a questionnaire associated with completion of the governance Self Assessment Report (SAR). A questionnaire had been included with the papers for the current meeting, and members were urged to complete and return the questionnaire as soon as possible in order to contribute to the compilation of the SAR. Comments about the style/content of the questionnaire would also be useful in order to ensure optimal effectiveness of the process in subsequent years.

7. Principal's Report

Members noted that current enrolments for 2008-09 are on track. Funding for individual students is at £2,822, below the national rate of £2,860.

There has been a relaxation of the rules associated with Train2Gain activity, resulting in the College giving significant review to the way in which the Faculty for Business and Professional Development operates in relation to current and future possibilities.

In connection with other sixth form presumptions in the area, the College will meet with representatives from Castle School at the end of August to discuss capital plans for provision for post-16 sport. Uffculme School, because of its isolated situation, is well-placed to develop plans for a sixth form. There is still a lack of clarity about plans in relation to the establishment of an academy to replace St Augustine's and Ladymead Schools. Although the College would not welcome the establishment of an 11-18 academy, it supports the rationale for reviewing 11-16 provision. There will be a further meeting with the relevant Diocesan representatives in early September.

In connection with the Machinery of Government and Raising Expectations changes, it is considered critical that sixth form colleges retain their incorporated status and a national funding methodology, with a balancing of funding between schools and post-16 colleges.

A recent internal audit report on health and safety matters has highlighted a number of areas which must benefit from added focus, and it has been agreed that the Principal's report to the Corporation will regularly include a standing item on health and safety matters. This is in addition to regular reporting through the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Staffing changes are very significant, with a total of 21 new staff entering the College, and 15 leaving. It is believed that salaries in school sixth forms currently appear not to pose any threat to recruitment at the College.

Performance Indicators indicate a positive performance at AS/A2 level. Retention appears to be satisfactory.

There has been one formal complaint from a parent during the current academic year. The complaint related to advice and guidance given to a student. There was no further pursuance of the complaint after a formal review of the circumstances.

There have been no known instances of fraud during the current academic year.

Levels of insurance will be reviewed at the time of the annual renewal of insurance during August.

8. Any Other Business

Changes to the internal audit schedule resulted in an opportunity to review VAT matters. It appears that there is potential for some VAT recovery, and that the College is currently operating within VAT thresholds/boundaries.

There was no other business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is 22 September 2008.

10. Closed Business

There was an item of closed business.

The meeting closed at 7.59 pm.

Signed.....

Date.....