

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation [CORP0809-3]

held on Monday 8 December 2008 in Room C15

Action

Present:

Guy Adams	Chair, Foundation Member	Peter Avery	Principal
Garry Charles	Member	Paul Grant	Parent Member
Jill Jeffreys	Parent Member	Hollie King	
John Peart	Student Member	Sue Popplewell	Staff Member
John Rudge		Rob Setchell	Staff Member
Mary Tighe		Gill Turner	Foundation Member
David Wood	Foundation Member	Alison Mackenzie	Staff Member

In Attendance:

Jane Scott	Clerk to the Corporation	Tim Duffen	Vice Principal: Resources
James Staniforth	Vice Principal: 16-19 Studies		

The meeting opened at 5.33 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); Penny James; Dominic Lynch; John Lockwood; Matt Mears (Student Member); Rosemary Viant; David Wood (Foundation Member).

2. Declaration of Interests

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

3. Minutes of Meetings**21 July 2008 CORP0708-6**

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed.

22 September 2008 (CORP0809-1)

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed.

20 October 2008 (CORP0809-2)

Subject to an amendment in CORP0809-2/II/1 to read £194k instead of £94, the Minutes were agreed and signed.

4. Matters Arising**21 July 2008 CORP0708-6**

Reference CORP0708-6/II/3, the matter of computers for governors will be discussed under Any Other Business during the current meeting.

Reference CORP0708-6/II/5c, the College has been engaged in an exchange of correspondence with the local MP and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

Reference CORP0708-6/II/5/Catering Services, members noted that the recent hygiene inspection of College catering provision had resulted in a number of issues being identified, impacting negatively on the rating awarded. The inspection had taken place at a time when Aramark had just taken over the catering contract. All the issues identified in the inspection have now been addressed. There had been a period of flux in personnel when Aramark had taken over the catering contract, but a newly-appointed manager is now making a significant positive impact on Aramark services to the College.

22 September 2008 CORP0809-1

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

20 October 2008 CORP0809-2

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

PART II: ISSUES FOR THE CURRENT MEETING

1. The College Bid for Capital Funding

Tim Duffen, Vice Principal: Resources, attended the meeting in order to give members up-to-date information about progress with plans associated with the bid for capital funding. The presentation is appended to the papers for the meeting.

Members noted that there is a prescribed procedure associated with preparation of the bid for capital funding. Appointments of consultants to oversee the different aspects of the projects have been made, and expert advice is being sought at every stage of the preparation process.

Whilst there is a standard approach for many new-build programmes, the College is in the unusual position of having no city-centre site to sell, with no associated requirement to then find an alternative site to develop. The LSC requirement for all new-build projects to be of an excellent BREEAM standard will however significantly impact on plans. (The Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method requires expenditure in the order of £3,200k per square metre, as opposed to expenditure which was in the order of £1,200k for the Hawthorn Building.).

It is anticipated that an Application in Principle (AiP) will have been completed by April 2009; it is only at this stage that the College can be assured of funding. The College is currently working closely with designers on space and planning aspects of the project. The need to ensure complete continuity of day-to day-operations during the period of works has been highlighted. Design plans currently include a new art building, drama and dance facilities, science facilities, a new sports hall and an atrium area.

The advice of the Corporation was sought in respect of the following points:

- The setting up of a special Project Committee to receive regular reports on progress
- In the pre-contract phase, there will be some costs over and above consultancy expenditure (already approved at CORP0809-2). Members were asked to give their consideration to a limit of £15k per single transaction/£30k cumulative during the period to submission of AiP, with approval of the Finance and General Purposes Committee/the Corporation above these limits
- The Richard Huish College Corporation will need to give its consideration to arrangements in respect of land rental for new buildings.

In consideration of these points, members gave their approval to the setting up of a Project Group. This was proposed by David Wood, seconded by John Rudge, and agreed *nem con*.

The meeting referred financial planning matters to the Finance and General Purposes Committee; the matter will be included as an agenda item at the next meeting of the Committee.

Foundation Trustees will consider the matter of land and buildings at the next meeting of the Richard Huish College Foundation.

2. Items for Approval

(a) Appointment and Re-appointment of Members

In a recent on-line ballot of all members of staff, Sue Popplewell had received the majority vote. David Wood proposed the appointment of Sue Popplewell as Staff Member. This was seconded by John Rudge, and agreed *nem con*.

Jill Jeffreys had received the majority vote in a ballot of all parents of 16-19 students. David Wood proposed the appointment of Jill Jeffreys as Parent Member. This was seconded by Gill Turner and agreed *nem con*.

David Wood makes a significant contribution to the work of the Corporation, both in general terms and more specifically to the Finance and General Purposes, Personnel and Search Committees. His re-appointment to the Corporation was proposed by Guy Adams, seconded by John Rudge, and agreed *nem con*.

Shirlene Adam will bring significant expertise and skills to the work of the Audit Committee. Her co-option to the Audit Committee for the period 2008-09 was proposed by David Wood, seconded by Garry Charles, and agreed *nem con*. Shirlene will also attend meetings of the Corporation as an observer.

Alison Mackenzie was thanked warmly for the valuable contribution which she made to the work of the Corporation during her period of appointment.

(b) Retention and Achievement Targets for 2008-09

Members noted that the national figure for retention at sixth form colleges averages at 91%. Retention to the College has remained stable during the preceding two years, with figures for lower and upper sixth averaging and meeting the College target. Mary Tighe proposed approval of the following targets for 2008-09:

- retention to College target of 97% for upper sixth students
- retention to College target of 95% for lower sixth students
- retention to course target of 94%.

The targets were seconded by Gill Turner, and agreed *nem con*.

The issue of an achievement target is much more complex, and in the light of achievement during 2007-08 needs further consideration in order to ensure that the target for 2008-09 is set at an appropriate level. Performance at AS level had been the lowest for six years at the end of 2007-08. Additional measures and resources have now been put in place to ensure that all students are afforded every opportunity to achieve their maximum potential grades. Lower performance at AS level was particularly impacted by performance in biology, psychology and English Language examinations, and steps have been taken to try and address the issues/concerns involved in the perceived under-marking of papers in these subjects. Whilst achievement of Minimum Target Grade (MTG) is directly affected by individual student performance, the College is consistently demonstrating improved value-added performance. The latter is particularly relevant in the light of the College endeavouring to provide the right opportunities for every student in a non-selective college to achieve their maximum potential.

David Wood proposed an achievement target of 76.4% MTG match for 2008-09. This was seconded by Mary Tighe and agreed *nem con*.

(c) Statement of Accounting Policies

Members noted that it is necessary to periodically review the statement of accounting policies in order to ensure the financial reporting is carried out in accordance with recommended standard practice.

The Statement of Accounting Policies was proposed for approval by John Rudge, seconded by Garry Charles and agreed *nem con*.

(d) Members' Report and Annual Financial Statements for Year Ended 31 July 2008

There had been no significant issues encountered during preparation of the Members' Report and Annual Financial Statements. Members had sought further clarification in respect of pensions/FRS17 matters, and were satisfied that the information represented a true and fair picture. Members also noted that the accounts of the Student Council had been audited as part of the overall process.

John Rudge proposed approval of the Members' Report and Annual Financial Statements. This was seconded by Garry Charles, and agreed *nem con*.

(e) The Management Letter of the Regularity Auditor/External Audit Service

The College had noted all the issues which had been raised by the External Audit Service, and action against these is in hand.

Garry Charles proposed approval of the Management Letter. This was seconded by Paul Grant, and agreed *nem con*.

(f) Letter of Representation

Members were satisfied that the Letter of Representation made appropriate statements in respect of financial reporting.

The Letter of Representation was proposed for approval by John Rudge, seconded by Garry Charles, and agreed *nem con*.

(g) Audit Committee Annual Report (including the Annual Report of the Internal Audit Service)

The Committee noted the significant work of the Audit Committee during the year, and in particular the work which it does in respect of monitoring action in respect of outstanding audit issues. The Annual Report of the Internal Audit Service was a comprehensive document summarising findings from field work.

The Annual Report of the Audit Committee and the Annual Report of the Internal Audit Service were proposed for approval by David Wood, seconded by Rob Setchell, and agreed *nem con*.

(h) Risk Management Action Plan

The Risk Management Action Plan and the work associated with its preparation is firmly embedded into College systems and subject to on-going review through the year.

Mary Tighe proposed approval of the Risk Management Action Plan, seconded by Gill Turner, and agreed *nem con*.

(i) Final Income and Expenditure Budget for 2008-09

The original Income and Expenditure budget had been very conservative in nature; the subsequent budget prepared with additional information to hand demonstrates a projected surplus of £131k, a much-improved position. *Inter alia*, members noted the significant costs associated with administration of examinations.

John Rudge proposed approval of the Final Income and Expenditure Budget for 2008-09, seconded by Garry Charles, and agreed *nem con*.

(j) Three Year Financial Forecast

Using all the information it currently has to hand, the College continues to demonstrate projected financial health. The document forms a strategic summary of activity and provides a working document for LSC planning. The Director of Finance is currently engaged in working on more complex financial projections for a ten-year period.

John Rudge proposed approval of the Three Year Financial Forecast, seconded by Paul Grant, and agreed *nem con*.

(k) Revised Format of Management Accounts

Members were mindful of their ongoing commitment to ensure that they receive full and informative financial information with which to underpin their knowledge of the College and the making of financial decisions. The new format of Management Accounts presents information in a more easily understood way; variations are regularly reported by the Principal.

John Rudge proposed approval of the revised format of accounts, seconded by David Wood, and agreed *nem con*.

(l) The Governance Self Assessment Report

Members were satisfied that the Self Assessment Report accurately reflected their activities during the preceding period, and that the strengths, weaknesses and action points were both accurate and realistic.

Gill Turner proposed approval of the Governance Self Assessment Report, seconded by Garry Charles, and agreed *nem con*.

(m) Terms of Reference of Committees of the Corporation

Members noted the importance of the need to ensure that all committees of the Corporation are able to maintain full quoracy. Additionally, there is a need to ensure that each committee and the Corporation as a whole has the necessary skills in which to transact its business. With this in mind, the Terms of Reference have been amended to include provision for co-opted members to join the Academic Planning and Quality, Audit, Finance and General Purposes, Personnel and Search Committees.

The amendments were proposed by John Rudge, seconded by Mary Tighe, and agreed *nem con*.

(n) Code on Appointments to the Corporation

The Code on Appointments to the Corporation had been included as an agenda item in anticipation of discussion due to take place at a Special Meeting of the Search Committee. However, the Search Committee had found that no amendment to the Code on Appointments had been necessary.

(o) Discovery of Fraud Policy

The Policy had been amended to include information about the newly appointed Internal Auditors, and the appointment of a Director of Finance. There had been no other changes, and the Policy had not been invoked during the preceding period.

John Rudge proposed approval of the Discovery of Fraud Policy, seconded by Paul Grant, and agreed *nem con*.

(p) Whistleblowing Policy

The Policy had not been invoked during the preceding period, and there was no reason for any significant change in the Policy. The name of a nominated governor to be contacted in whistleblowing matters had been included, along with revised information about the Internal Audit Service.

John Rudge proposed approval of the Whistleblowing Policy, seconded by Garry Charles, and agreed *nem con*.

(q) Adoption of Model Publication Scheme for Further Education

Members noted that there is an obligation to adopt an appropriate scheme by January 2009. Rather than engage in a complex process of creating a customised scheme, the College was proposing full adoption of the Model Scheme for Further Education.

The Model Publication Scheme for Further Education was proposed for approval by Gill Turner, seconded by Mary Tighe, and agreed *nem con*.

3. Annual Report on Child Protection

Members noted the content of the report which had been circulated with the papers for the meeting. During the coming year, work will be done to ensure that all students are aware of services available in respect of child protection matters. Child Protection training will also be incorporated into the governor training programme.

Gill Turner proposed approval of the Report on Child Protection, seconded by Mary Tighe, and agreed *nem con*.

4. Reports from Committees

There was little further substantive report associated with Reports from Committees as much of the business had been dealt with under agenda item 2 of the current meeting, Items for Approval.

The following points were highlighted in discussion:

- The Audit Committee had given its consideration to the completed questionnaire in respect of the Financial Management Control Evaluation of the Framework for Excellence. The Committee noted that it was a lengthy document requiring considerable input from College managers. The Committee had noted the responses contained in the document and authorised the Principal's signature before onward transmission to the LSC.
- Completion rates of Professional Review and Development (PRAD) interviews had significantly improved during 2007-08 and will continue to be monitored as appropriate.

5. Procedural Matters

Members of the Corporation were reminded of their duties in respect of eligibility and the Register of Interests. Members were also reminded of requirements in respect of attendance, and the need to ensure maximum attendance at meetings whenever possible. The Corporation declined to set any formal target for attendance but understood the need to ensure maximum attendance at meetings.

6. Principal's Report

The following points were highlighted in discussion:

- Lower performance at AS level examinations in the summer of 2008 had impacted on transition from lower to upper sixth, possibly to the tune of 60 students overall
- National issues associated with payment of Education Maintenance Allowance had also impacted at College level, although it is difficult to quantify the impact at lower sixth level
- It was acknowledged that the cost of public transport is becoming more of an issue for families as the impact of prevailing economic circumstances takes effect
- Recruitment to the Faculty of Business and Professional Development is currently buoyant. However, it was acknowledged that recruitment may become more difficult as the effects of the downturn in the economy impact at all levels
- The College is closely monitoring all activity in respect of post-16 provision in the local community. There is a perception that provision is becoming fragmented and without coherence
- Sixth Form Colleges will be asked to affirm their designation as part of a national agenda to create a specific sixth form sector
- Health and safety matters are now being routinely reviewed through the newly created Health and Safety Committee. The Corporation will routinely receive reports from the Committee via the Principal's report to the Corporation.
- The Principal reported that there had some potential for industrial action as a result of the recent pay negotiations. However, settlement had been reached without any call for action.
- Recruitment to staff has been at a slower pace than in recent times, with appointments only being made in cases of replacement of members of staff

- There had been significant concerns about the marking of examination papers in biology, psychology and English Language during the summer 2008 examinations. The College had requested the remarking of some papers, especially from students who had achieved notably low marks in their overall results (students achieving A grades in their other subjects, for example). Although there had been some cases of up-marking occurring as a result of this exercise, the majority of students undertaking these particular examinations had not been up-graded as a result.

7. Arrangements for Annual Strategy Meeting and Governor Hospitality

Members were reminded of the forthcoming annual Strategy Meeting which will take place at the Mount Somerset Hotel on 6 February 2009. A full programme will follow in due course. In addition, there will be a dinner for governors and partners/spouses to be held at the Sanctuary Restaurant in Taunton on 31 January 2009, with full details to follow.

The Chair of Corporation noted that he would be instigating a round of informal discussion with chairpersons of Committees in order to inform the strategic agenda.

8. Any Other Business

(a) Reference CORP0809-3/I/4, the Corporation noted that information was to hand relating to the specification and purchase price of suitable computers for Corporation use. The current specification would allow extended use of laptop computers up to a maximum in excess of ten hours. The current purchase price is c£900 including VAT per unit. In discussion, members noted the merits of moving towards an electronic system of dissemination of meeting papers, but also recognised that the cost, training and other implications were very significant. Whilst there was consensus in principle, the overall decision was referred to the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for further discussion.

(b) Members noted that the new College prospectus was an attractive and informative advertisement for aspiring students of the College.

(c) Significant work has been undertaken in association with the Student Council review of its Constitution. It will be presented to the Corporation for approval in due course.

(d) The Student Member noted that the recent promotion of the National Union of Students *Extra Card* had resulted in significantly improved sales, positively impacting on Student Council income.

(e) Members noted the circulated information about College insurance and provision in respect of Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide. Further information was requested in respect of individual and Corporate governor cover.

Action: Clerk to Corporation to obtain and circulate additional information.

There was no other business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is the annual Strategy Day, to be held on 6 February 2009 from 8.30 am onwards.

10. Closed Business

The Principal gave a summary report on the recent round of redundancies which had arisen as a result of changes in key skills provision. A total of four teaching staff redundancies will take place at 31 December 2008. The cost was originally budgeted at £9,819; this has risen by £475 as a result of an agreed pay settlement. It is not anticipated that any there will be any appeals against the redundancies.

The meeting closed at 8.24 pm.

Signed as a correct record.....

Date.....