

Ruskin College

GOVERNING EXECUTIVE

**Minutes of the five hundred and fifty-first meeting of the
Governing Executive held on Friday 8 May 2009
at Ruskin College, Oxford**

Present: David Norman (Chair), Carole Orgell-Rosen, Pearl Ryall, Helen Kidd, Sue Ledwith, Audrey Mullender, Jane Dixon, Pam Johnson, Mike Bradley, Ruth Hunt (part)

In attendance: Sally Courtney, Chris Wilkes, Rebecca Cox (minutes)

PART A

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| 1 | <p>Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Liz Mathews, Paul Atherton, Jan Etienne, Jo Morris, Carol Newbury, Pamela Roberts, John Fray, Chris Baugh and Doug Nicholls.
Noted: that Rob Elkins had stood down as President of the RSU. As Paul Atherton was unable to attend, the RSU had been offered the opportunity to send a representative to this meeting as an observer.</p> | Action |
| 2 | <p>Absent
There were no members absent without apologies.</p> | |
| 3 | <p>Minutes
Confirmed: as a correct record the minutes of Part A of the Governing Executive meeting held on 20 February 2009.</p> | |
| 4 | <p>Matters arising
Received: report detailing breakdown of running costs for each site.
Noted: the contents of the report.
Noted: that there were no further matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p> | |
| 5 | <p>Policy review</p> | |
| 5.1 | <p>Received: revised Data Protection Policy.
Noted: that the policyholders and processes had been updated, but the substantive content of the policy remained the same. The General Secretary confirmed that those staff members who were designated co-ordinators would be given a reminder about their role as defined in the policy.
Approved: the revised Data Protection Policy.</p> | |
| 5.2 | <p>Received: verbal report from the Principal regarding deferral of review of Code of Ethics for Research and Learning and Teaching Strategy.
Noted: that these would be looked at in the various academic Programme Boards before being considered by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and brought back to a later Governing Executive.</p> | |
| 6 | <p>Amendment to Memorandum and Articles
Received: a report detailing the proposed amendment to section 31 of the Articles of Association.
Noted: that this revision had been requested to enable incoming staff and student representatives to be elected by the Governing Executive to the Governing Executive - with full voting rights - prior to the formal ratification of their election by Council at the AGM.</p> | |

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Approved: the amendment to section 31 of the Articles of Association. The Clerk was asked to write to the RSU to inform them that this change had been made in response to their request.

Clerk

7 Finance Committee

7.1 Noted: that there was nothing additional to report from the last meeting of the Finance Committee that was not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

(This item was taken out of order.)

7.2 Received: report on the financial position to the end of March 2009.

Noted: the Finance Director summarised the report, indicating that the year-end deficit was anticipated to be approximately £234K. This was largely due to low student numbers, although a further £90K would be released into the operational budget if the LSC confirmed that it was not intending to clawback funds as a result of this shortfall. The Finance Director also reported that it had just been confirmed that Ruskin could apply inflationary increases to the Residential Colleges Committee (RCC) funded courses for this year and last, amounting to between £36K and £38K. Therefore, should the LSC money be released, the deficit at year end could be much closer to the £100K budgeted – thanks too to the hard work undertaken to reduce non-pay costs across the College this year.

7.3 Agreed: that the recommendation from Finance Committee would be taken with the next item, under 'Capital Project'.

8 Capital Project

Received: verbal report from the Principal on the Capital Project and two tabled diagrams.

Noted: that last week, following the allocation of £300m for Capital Projects in the Budget, the College had been asked to complete a lengthy questionnaire, with five days notice, to prove that it could get through the newly-devised criteria of a "readiness gateway". This required demonstrating that Ruskin was ready to get contractors on site within three months, which – for Phase 1 – it was able to do. As the College had been able to use funds from asset disposal to proceed with architects, planning and tendering for contractors, it was in a position to apply for £4.7m for Phase 1. (This was the bulk of the money required for this phase, and the funds from the sale of Walton Street would be used for Phase 2). Other organisations, such as the Oxford and Cherwell Valley College who had planned a £100m project, were unable to submit an application as they were not ready and would have to wait until the next funding round in 2012. The submission process had changed entirely, and the tabled diagrams illustrated the timetable and the criteria that the College's application would be judged against. All supporting documentation would be submitted this afternoon. Ruskin would be judged on the questionnaire and background evidence submitted, on information given to the LSC at a meeting earlier this year and based on comment from the regional LSC. The Principal had contacted them to ensure that they had sufficient information to give positive answers. Colleges would only be interviewed if their application was marginal. A decision would be taken by the national LSC on 3 June. If Phase 1 did receive funding, this would allow the refurbishment of Smith and Webb buildings, giving the additional en-suite rooms so important to generating income, and the construction of the dining building. If not, the College would at least finally know where it stood in terms of funding for the Capital Project. For Phase 2, advice had indicated that funding could not be applied for until 2012, which would be too late to enable the sale of Walton Street to proceed. The Finance Committee had therefore recommended that the Governing Executive grant the College approval to formulate a 'Plan B', for both the project as a whole and for Phase 2 only.

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This would entail streamlining the project to fit within the budget available from the sale of Walton Street and a proposed capital input from a Trade Union partner against future work, and a partnership with a developer for the residential builds – which could possibly involve the private sector. A proposal for a viable 'Plan B' would then be brought back to the July meeting of the Governing Executive for discussion and formal approval.

(Ruth Hunt joined the meeting at 11.35am.)

Following questions, the Principal confirmed that the College was still on track for the sale of Walton Street, as Exeter College were tied to the Project timetable which had LSC delays built into it. The Principal was thanked for her work to date which had enabled the College to be in a position to submit an application at this stage.

Noted: the Chair re-iterated the Finance Committee's recommendation that alternative funding for the Capital Project should be explored.

Approved: the recommendation.

9 Search Committee

Received: minutes of Search Committee meeting held on 4 March 2009.

Noted: that there were still vacancies on both the Finance and Audit Committees and attempts to approach people had been unsuccessful. The Chair confirmed that Gordon Beesley was not able to resume his involvement with the College to the degree that Finance Committee membership would require, though it might be possible for him to be co-opted as an Audit Committee member. Pam Johnson volunteered to join the Audit Committee and the Chair thanked her on behalf of the College. These matters would be taken to the next Search Committee.

Clerk

10 Audit Committee

Received: a verbal report from the Chair of the Audit Committee on the meeting held on 6 March 2009.

Noted: that the tendering process for internal auditors had been agreed. As part of their watching brief for the Capital Project, the auditors had again cited it as a critical risk and emphasised the need to have all funding in place before starting construction work on each phase. A number of low risk areas had been identified and were currently being worked on by the College. The most significant medium risk areas were the need for a simple business plan for catering services linked to the Property Strategy and the inclusion of IT risk in the Disaster Recovery Plan, both of which were being addressed.

11 Principal's report

Received: a report from the Principal.

Noted: the Principal summarised her report, in particular:

- **Finance:** congratulations were offered to the Finance Director and her team for their hard work and innovation in bringing down non-pay costs
- **Curriculum and Quality:** a great deal of work had been carried out as part of an Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review of student assessment by the Quality Assurance Agency. This had been a useful exercise which had brought up many commendations and only a few suggestions for change. The Strategic Review of the Law and ILTUS group had proved very helpful in bringing the team together and such reviews would be carried out for all subject groups on a rolling basis. The possibility of the TUC bringing its Organising Academy to Ruskin was currently under discussion
- **Property Strategy:** there were a number of planning applications with

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the Council for which consultation was now complete. The majority of comments concerned the siting of the electricity sub-station and the question of traffic on Stoke Place

- **Conclusion:** that politically and economically challenging times were ahead, and the Principal stressed the importance of all stakeholders working together to make Ruskin a beacon for the labour and trade union movement.

During questions and comments, a number of issues were discussed and suggestions made. It was noted that:

- a joint UNISON and UCU JNC was being developed which, it was hoped, would lead to more effective working relationships in the future
- there were many incidences of redundancies in the area of adult learning currently and Ruskin was commended for not being in a position where staff were being lost
- that the College was proceeding with plans to pursue Train to Gain money as discussed previously at Governing Executive, but the funding available had been significantly reduced due to overspend and many providers had lost their contracts altogether
- that the College's Outreach and Recruitment Committee was working hard to address the issue of student numbers and ensure that the College would recruit up to its capped budget next year
- that Governing Executive members do receive and give out College prospectuses and brochures, but it would be helpful for them to receive feedback when this had resulted in students enrolling for courses. The mechanism for eliciting how students decided to come to Ruskin had been amended and results were awaited. It was also suggested that it would be helpful for an email to be sent regularly to members with a short paragraph of Ruskin news and a weblink to courses available which could then be forwarded on where appropriate. A further suggestion that there should be a process for informing individual unions about success stories of their own members' Ruskin experience, which again could be passed on, was particularly welcomed.

CW

AM

Agreed: that it would be useful to include a session on marketing the College at the Council meeting in June.

Agreed: Ruth Hunt offered to spend half a day with incoming student representatives following their election to share her experience as a student activist and all agreed that this would be most helpful.

Clerk

12 Student representatives' report

This item was not taken, as there were no student representatives present.

13 Academic and Quality Standards Committee

Received: minutes of Part A of the meeting held on 18 March 2009.

Noted: the Principal thanked GTFU colleagues for their work on online courses.

14 Date of meetings for 2008/09

Noted: the remaining meeting date for this academic year:

- 3 July 2009

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.20pm