

Ruskin College

GOVERNING EXECUTIVE

**Minutes of the five hundred and fifty-third meeting of the
Governing Executive held on Friday 9 October 2009
at Ruskin College, Oxford**

Present: David Norman (Chair), Carole Orgell-Rosen, Pearl Ryall, Helen Kidd, Audrey Mullender, Liz Mathews, Jo Morris, John Fray, Ruth Hunt, Jan Etienne, Jane Aldgate, Nigel Williams, Pamela Roberts, Pam Johnson, Doug Nicholls

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

PART A

- 1 **Apologies for absence** Action
Apologies were received from Chris Baugh, Jane Dixon, Mike Bradley and Carol Newbury.

- 2 **Absent**
Fiona Sloman was absent without apologies.

- 3 **Chair's introduction**
Noted: that Ruskin had worked for over ten years on plans to rejuvenate its property. In July 2008, the Governing Executive agreed in principle to focus the College's business in Headington, whilst retaining a presence at Walton Street, subject to securing the necessary financial and planning package – details of which were before the meeting today. The Chair stated his intention to give all members present the opportunity to speak under item 6.

- 4 **Minutes**
Confirmed: as a correct record the minutes of Part A of the Governing Executive meeting held on 3 July 2009.

- 5 **Matters arising**
Letter to the UCU
Noted: that the Chair had written to the Secretary of the UCU to explain the constitution of the College and a training session on protocol would be held on 27 November following the Governing Executive meeting.

- 6 **Election of staff and student members**
Approved: the election of Nigel Williams as a member of the Governing Executive. The Chair asked that formal thanks be passed on to Sue Ledwith for her service as a staff representative on Governing Executive together with best wishes for the future. NW
Noted: the Principal reported that the students did not yet have a full committee and elections were due to take place shortly. The management team remained in close contact with the President.

- 7 **Financial Plan**
Received: summary of the Financial Plan 2009-2012.
Noted: the document was considered page by page and the Finance Director clarified a number of points, including:
 - that the "rolled out efficiency savings programme" referred to in section 2 referred mainly to non-pay costs and involved ongoing work with budget-holders looking at procurement practices
 - that the College's self-assessment of its financial health as

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“satisfactory” had once again been upgraded to “good” by the LSC

- that the figures in the 3-year financial forecast had been adjusted based on the assumption that the Walton Street site would be disposed of.

Approved: the Financial Plan 2009-2012.

8 Capital Project

Agreed: that the Principal should introduce the item as a whole, following which questions would be taken on each of the individual papers.

[*Doug Nicholls joined the meeting at 11.25am*]

Received: minutes of the joint meeting of the Capital Project Steering Group and the Finance Committee held on Friday 11 September 2009.

Received: a background paper on the planning and funding case for the Capital Project.

Received: overall budget planning for the Ruskin College redevelopment.

Received: planning permission progress update and a letter of comfort from West Waddy ADP.

Received: a revised phasing programme for the streamlined Capital Project.

Received: the internal audit risk assessment report on the Capital Project (September 2009).

Received: an indicative loan offer from the Co-operative Bank

Received: a paper illustrating the servicing of a £5m loan.

Noted: that all but one of the College’s buildings had been declared unfit for purpose and it was clear that Ruskin had no option but to move forward. In the light of the fact that there would be no funding from the LSC, details of a streamlined project together with a budget and phasing programme were being brought to the meeting today. In order to satisfy the conditions for the sale of Walton Street, Governing Executive members had to be clear that funding and planning for the redevelopment of the Headington site were in place. The necessary planning permissions had been received and advisers had confirmed that any changes which reduced building sizes would be acceptable. It was proposed that funding for the project would be generated through the disposal of properties, including Walton Street, and the use of the Development Fund, but in addition it would now be necessary for the College to take out a loan. An indicative offer had been presented today for information only, together with realistic figures demonstrating that this was affordable. The streamlined project would prioritise residential accommodation, with the 3 refurbished blocks being completed in time for the next academic year and the added benefit that it would not be necessary to move students off-site. The catering facility would be situated in the heart of the College, which would make it a social area with good potential for generating income from passing trade. The project as now proposed would still offer a major new academic building, library and teaching areas and would still be completed by summer 2012 when the move to Headington would be made.

Noted: that a number of queries were raised regarding the taking out of a loan and the Principal clarified that the funding package would include a loan *up to a maximum* of £5m. The College was currently in talks with the GFTU regarding a potential partnership, which – if this went ahead – would mean a reduction in the loan required. Fundraising was also ongoing and gaining momentum, with almost £500K raised to date (which was included in the budget). The final terms of the loan would come back to a future meeting of the Governing Executive for approval. The banks that had made offers to date all appreciated the phased nature of the development, so funds could be taken as required, and Gordon Beesley, a member of Ruskin Council and former Managing Director of Unity Trust Bank, had offered ongoing advice on this matter. (The Chair also declared a personal interest at this point as a former

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Director of Unity Trust Bank). As the College was a limited company, Governing Executive members' liability would be limited to £1.

Agreed: that a formal letter, approved by the College's solicitors, clearly stating the financial and legal position with regard to Governing Executive members' personal liability should be brought to the next meeting.

CW

Noted: that a question was raised regarding the issue of disabled access in the buildings proposed in the streamlined project. The Principal confirmed that the new buildings would exceed the legal requirements for disabled access, and the lift in the academic building would link into the Rookery making it largely accessible. In two of the refurbished residential blocks there would be specific bedrooms that would be fully accessible.

Noted: the comments of each of the members present regarding the proposed streamlined project and associated funding and planning package. There was a general consensus that it was with great sadness that Walton Street would be sold, but that there was no option but to move forward and redevelop the Headington site in order to provide Ruskin students with the residential and academic facilities that they required and deserved, and to ensure the College was fit for purpose and able to generate income in the 21st century. A number of practical suggestions were made in the areas of health and safety during the redevelopment, communication with staff and students regarding the Capital Project, and effective PR to promote what Ruskin will have to offer once work was complete.

Each item was put to a vote, where appropriate, as follows:

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| 8.1 | To approve: the recommendation in the minutes of the joint meeting of the Capital Project Steering Group and the Finance Committee held on 11 September 2009 that ' <i>funding and planning had been secured and the Capital Project should be approved</i> '. | Carried |
| 8.2 | To approve: the streamlined Capital Project. | Carried |
| 8.3 | To approve: the revised phasing programme for the streamlined Capital Project. | Carried |
| 8.4 | To approve: in principle that borrowing up to a maximum of £5m will be needed. | Carried |
| 8.5 | To agree: that the balance of the Development Fund be restricted to the Capital Project. | Agreed |
| 8.6 | To agree: that planning and funding for the Capital Project as now proposed have been secured. | Agreed |

[The meeting broke for lunch at 12.45pm and resumed at 1.40pm when Jan Etienne and Pam Johnson left the meeting.]

Noted: that a momentous and historic decision had been taken today. A great deal of hard work had been undertaken to bring these plans to fruition and thanks were given to all those involved.

9 Search Committee

- 9.1 **Noted:** the minutes of the Search Committee meeting held on 11 September 2009.
- 9.2 **Received:** report on the record of attendance at Governing Executive and its committees in 2008.
Noted: the content of the report.

10 Audit Committee

Noted: the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 19 June 2009.

11 Principal's report

Received: a report from the Principal.

Noted: that since the report had been written, term had started well with

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students and staff working together on various campaigns. Also, a cycle ride to raise funds for the Capital Project would be taking place on 22 November.

12 Student representatives' report

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

13 Governing Executive self-assessment

13.1 Noted: report on feedback from the self-assessment exercise.

13.2 Noted: that this had been as useful exercise which would help to inform the training session on protocol to be held after the next meeting.

14 Academic Quality and Standards Committee

Received: minutes of Part A of the meeting held on 19 June 2009.

15 Date of meetings for 2009/10

Noted: meeting dates for the remainder of the academic year.

Agreed: that the meeting proposed for 7 May 2010 should be changed, as this would be the day after the local elections.

Clerk

[Post-meeting note: this date has been changed and the meeting will be held on 14 May 2010]

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 2.38pm