

Ruskin College

GOVERNING EXECUTIVE

Minutes of the five hundred and sixtieth meeting of the Governing Executive held on Friday 20 May 2011 at 11.00am at Ruskin College, Walton Street, Oxford (Raph Sam Hall)

Present:	Jane Aldgate Jane Dixon (part) John Fray Pam Johnson Des McDermott Audrey Mullender Teresa Munby Carole Orgell-Rosen (Chair) Pearl Ryall	In attendance:	Rebecca Cox (minutes) Hilda Kean Guy Langton Chris Wilkes
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PART A

- 1 Apologies for absence** Action
Apologies were received from Mike Bradley, Doug Nicholls, Jo Morris, David Norman, Sally Courtney, Anne Hock, Kieron Winters and Liz Mathews (for whom Guy Langton was in attendance as an observer). David Norman had recently become Mayor of Southend-on-Sea and had a prior engagement to attend a civic funeral today. Carole Orgell-Rosen was to chair the meeting in his absence.
- 2 Absent**
Jan Etienne and Chris Baugh were absent without apologies.
- 3 Declaration of interests**
Noted: that no member present declared any interest, financial or otherwise, relating to any item on the agenda.
- 4 Minutes**
Confirmed: as a correct record the minutes of Part A of the Governing Executive meeting held on 11 March 2011.
- 5 Matters arising**
Noted: that there were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.
- 6 Finance Committee**

 - 6.1 Received:** tabled minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 9 May 2011.
Noted: in response to a question, the arrangement with regard to the additional, unexpected £109K received from the SFA was clarified. If the projected targets were not met and the funds not used, they would have to be paid back. This would have no impact on future funding.
 - 6.2 Received:** a report on the financial position to the end of March 2011.
Noted: in the absence of the Finance Director, the General Secretary highlighted the key points, including:

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- that it was anticipated that Ruskin would meet the target that would enable it to keep the additional £109K, but doing so was dependent on short course numbers equalling the projections. If this were achieved, it would have a significant impact on the end of year position
- that the projected cost per student in this academic year, including FE students as well as HE, was £9,213. This was of note as the proposed HE tuition fee for 2012/13 was £8,500 per student.

6.3 There were no questions or comments.

Received: draft Access Agreement for 2012/13.

Noted: that this had been submitted to the Office of Fair Access (OFFA) and the document would remain a draft until it received their approval. They had declared themselves unlikely to turn it down, but might ask for clarification or amendments. The College was expecting a response from OFFA in mid-July. The Access Agreement demonstrated how the College would spend some of its income from tuition fees on widening participation and retention measures. The guidance for colleges with a good widening participation record was that between ten and twenty percent should be spent on such measures. Ruskin fell into this category and the widening participation targets set in the Access Agreement had always been met. The additional measures would therefore be aimed at improving retention between years in HE. Retention rates were currently 84%, which was below average for universities, and the target was to improve this to 88% by 2016/17. The proposed methods of achieving this outlined in the document were to be discussed in more detail at AQSC. The Principal thanked the General Secretary for his hard work in putting this together over the Easter break.

6.4 **Noted:** a letter from the SFA regarding Ruskin's Financial Statements 2009/10.

Noted: that the College had self-assessed its position as 'satisfactory', whereas the SFA had awarded a grade of 'good'. It was felt that the wording of the letter was rather bizarre in that it suggested that the College might be asked to justify why it had awarded itself a lower grade than the SFA. The General Secretary reported that no such rationale had been requested and it was expected that this would be addressed when the Financial Plan was submitted. It was noted that the SFA's grade was due to cash held by the College, which included that for the Capital Project. The grade could clearly be affected next year when the funds had been spent.

7 Financial Management and Control Evaluation

Received: a letter from the SFA.

Noted: that this related to the return submitted in November, though did not confirm the College's self-assessment. The General Secretary reported that Ruskin would be completing the full version this year in anticipation of an Ofsted inspection next year.

8 Audit Committee

8.1 **Received:** the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 25 March 2011.

Noted: that the content of the internal audit report on financial and strategic planning had been criticised at the Audit Committee meeting for focusing too heavily on financial planning. The General Secretary had explained at the time that it was difficult to look at strategy effectively until the situation with regard to funding and fees was more certain, and it had been agreed that a further report on strategic planning would be undertaken once the position was clearer. The Audit Committee continued its close scrutiny of the Capital Project.

8.2 **Approved:** the annual schedule of business for the Audit Committee.

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- 9 Policy review**
Received: the Staff Development Strategy.
Noted: the Dean introduced the policy, explaining that this document outlined a clear strategy for the next three years, highlighting how existing work would be built upon and how this would tie in with Ruskin's strategic aims.
Approved: the Staff Development Strategy.
- 10 Meeting dates for the next academic year**
Approved: the meeting dates for 2011/12.
- 11 Clerk to the Governors**
Received: the job details for the post of Clerk to the Governors.
Noted: that the wording had been revised by the current Clerk to make it less intimidating.
Agreed: that the requirement to be committed to the mission of Ruskin College should be added to the person specification. Clerk
Agreed: that it should be suggested to the Chair of Governing Executive that either he or his nominee from the Governing Executive should be involved in the selection process. AM
Agreed: that, as the current Clerk was to finish at the end of this academic year, the new appointment should be made in time for a September start. CW
- 12 Project Board**
- 12.1** **Received:** the minutes of the Project Board meeting held on 9 May 2011 and a tabled copy of the newsletter distributed to the local community by Leadbitter.
Noted: that Pearl Ryall, who had chaired the meeting in David Norman's absence, felt that the Capital Project had moved into a more positive phase of development.
Noted: that a discussion had taken place regarding a letter sent to all members of the Governing Executive from a sub-committee of the Friends of Old Headington, objecting to the proposed development of Ruskin Fields. As recommended by the Project Board meeting, the Chair of the Governing Executive had responded to the letter on behalf of all members suggesting that concerns be expressed through the formal consultation process. Since then, a similar letter had been received by members of the Governing Executive from Stoke Place residents. This letter implied that trespassing on Ruskin's land was acceptable, and legal advice was being taken in case residents were attempting to assert rights over the land. Once the lawyers had checked it, a response would once again be sent out from David Norman on behalf of the Governing Executive as a whole – members were asked not to respond individually. It was agreed that it was vital to have a co-ordinated, advised and balanced response to any such letters.
Noted: The Principal outlined how the College was intending to put its points across during the consultation process, including circulating a flier containing suggested points to raise if writing in support of the development of Ruskin Fields, linking in with groups in Northway and Barton, ensuring a strong presence at the Headington Festival and mobilising the support of housing and homelessness organisations. It was agreed that such a proactive approach, working both within the consultation process and more widely, would be essential.
Noted: that two letters had appeared in *The Oxford Times* today, both of which gave erroneous and misleading information about Ruskin Fields.
Agreed: that a letter should be sent to *The Oxford Times* as soon as possible, either by the College or one of its allies, to counter this misinformation. It was felt to be imperative that the Governing Executive, the College and its allies use the media both to respond to incorrect assertions and to promote Ruskin's position and Gov Exec/AM

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proposal where possible.

Agreed: that a one-page document should be sent to Governing Executive and College members explaining the proposal and its positive benefits to enable people to talk with confidence in support of it.

Noted: that the Principal offered thanks and congratulations to the WEA, who had received a windfall and were looking at the possibility of organising and part-funding a community mosaic-making project, which could include Barton and Northway residents, and representatives of Ruskin, with a view to creating a mosaic for the former exterior wall of the Rookery. This was currently being discussed.

Noted: that the College would be enlisting the services of a move management company, who would be backed by a small committee of staff members in 'team leader' positions, to oversee the move from Walton Street to Headington. Some external members of the Governing Executive reported very positive personal experience of such services.

12.2 Recommendation for a VFM review of the Stoke Place properties after 2012

Noted: that, in line with its legal duty, the Management Team proposed to look at the value for money of the peripheral properties after 2012 when the new and refurbished buildings would be available. This would be an evidence-based review looking at the space available, their actual and potential use and the possible market value of the properties.

Agreed: that the Governing Executive was clear that it was not making a decision at this meeting to sell any of the Stoke Place properties. By approving a value for money review, the Governing Executive was simply meeting its responsibility to check whether Ruskin's assets were being used properly. It was consequently agreed that the exercise be called a 'value for money analysis'.

Approved: the recommendation that a value for money analysis of the Stoke Place properties after 2012 be undertaken. Teresa Munby and Des McDermott asked that their vote against this be recorded in the minutes.

Noted: that the Governing Executive offered assurance that, should any changes be proposed in the future as a result of the value for money analysis, there would be full consultation with staff and students to ensure that the impact on the College was properly considered.

12.3 **Approved:** an amendment to the terms of reference of the Project Board reducing the number of meetings a year to four.

Noted: that there would be two meetings in the summer term, which would be the most crucial in terms of the completion of the redevelopment and the coordination of the move to Headington. Should it be necessary, it would be possible for the Chair to convene an emergency meeting of the Project Board at any time.

13 Academic Quality and Standards Committee

13.1 Received: the minutes of Part A of the meeting held on 4 March 2011.

13.2 Approved: the annual schedule of business for the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

14 Principal's report

Received: a report from the Principal.

Noted: that the IQER report contained more commendations than recommendations and would be brought to the next meeting. The Principal highlighted two dates for members' diaries:

- 1 July 2011 – the Council meeting and summer buffet would take place in Headington and would be combined with a foundation stone-laying ceremony for the new building. The stone would be laid by Jim Callaghan's grandson who was currently a Ruskin student

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- 27 October 2012 – this was the working date for the launch event for the new building.

The figures attached to the Principal's report related to success rates. Due to the way that the data was presented, it was clear that Asian communities were under-represented in the College overall. There was also evidence of underperformance by those with experience of homelessness and mental ill-health. The figures would help advise where the focus of the retention measures should be.

15 Student representative's report

Noted: that the results of the RSU elections would be known shortly and it was hoped that there would be student representation at the next meeting.

(Jane Dixon left the meeting at 12.45pm.)

17 Date of meetings for 2010/11

Noted: the remaining meeting date for this academic year, at 11.00am:

- 8 July 2011

Noted: John Fray brought members attention to the proposed closure of BBC Oxford's television services, which had given Ruskin good access in the past. He asked whether Ruskin would write in support of the local journalists and against the proposed threat to their output.

Agreed: that the College would write and John Fray should draft a letter.

JF

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.47pm.