

GOVERNING EXECUTIVE

Minutes of Part A of the five hundred and eighty-second meeting of the Governing Executive held on Friday 13th May 2016 at 10.30am at Ruskin College, Dunstan Road, Old Headington, Oxford, OX3 9BZ

Present:

Carole Orgell-Rosen (Chair) O
Alan Shepherd (Vice-Chair) O
Van Coulter O
Neil Crew O
Wendy Dawson O *part*
Anne Hock O
Paul Inman O
Roger McKenzie O
Pearl Ryall O
Paul Di Felice S
Peter Dwyer S *part*
Ed Hart S
Bridget Ng'andu S *part*
Kieron Winters S
Lisa Birch St
Tony Taylor St
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In attendance:

Sally Courtney (Finance Director) *part*
Lawrence Vincent (Acting Vice-Principal) *part*
Elaine Nicholls (HR Consultant) *part*

Miriam David (Academic Advisor)

Helen Jeffries (Clerk)

Ordinary member
Staff member
Student member

PART A

- 1 Welcome and apologies for absence:** Action
Apologies for absence were received from Chris Baugh, Rob Hancock and Doug Nicholls.
Agreed: that Lawrence Vincent should attend as an observer.
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
Declarations of interest were received from Paul Di Felice and Roger McKenzie.
- 3 Minutes silence following the recent death of Dr Chris Wilkes**
The governors stood for a minutes silence following the recent death of Dr Chris Wilkes, Principal of the College.
Thanks were offered to the Chair and Vice-Chair for their work during the sad time following Chris's death. The Chair and Vice-Chair thanked the Acting Interim Principal, the Finance Director and the staff and students of the College for their help.

Agreed: that the walled garden should be re-named the Chris Wilkes garden and that the plaque should be unveiled on Community Day.

4 Approve new members

Approved: the nominations of Ed Hart and Tony Taylor as staff and student governors respectively.

5. Outcomes of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) review

Received: a presentation from the Acting Interim Principal on the outcomes of the QAA review. The following points were noted:

5.1: that the QAA appeared to have understood the primary purpose of the College. The Acting Interim Principal thanked the student lead (Lisa Birch) and the staff of the College for all their work for the review. The QAA praised the rigorous standards of the College, the management of the curriculum and the impact of the vocational programme. It commended the College on student engagement.

5.2: the College met UK expectations and was commended on the quality of learning opportunities. However the information about learning opportunities required improvement.

5.3: the following points of good practice were noted in the report;

- Rigour in admission.
- The student engagement strategy.
- The use of external expertise.
- The support for the early student experience.
- Strong and effective partnerships.
- Strategic leadership for improvement

5.4: the review recommended that the College ensured through a clear and explicit process that the website and all external communication regarding courses were consistent, accurate and standardised.

5.5: the College was reading through the report. It would be published twelve weeks after the review. The criticism of the public information meant that use of the QAA logo was suspended. The College had ten weeks in which to produce an action plan to address the issue. The usage of the QAA logo could be suspended for up to twelve months.

Sally Courtney joined the meeting at 10.45a.m.

5.6: the Acting Vice-Principal would lead on developing the action plan. The College planned to employ a person to look at all public information. Governors could act as 'critical friends' during the process.

5.7: the praise for the good practice in the College was welcomed as a good news story, and it was noted that consideration should be made of how to use it to promote the College.

5.8: that the report would not impact directly on any Ofsted visit, however it may form part of the intelligence used by an inspector.

An electronic copy of the presentation would be sent to governors.

Paul Di Felice withdrew from the meeting at 10.55a.m.

Clerk

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL GOVERNANCE

6

Post of Principal

Noted: that the Chair had appointed Paul Di Felice as Acting Interim Principal on Chair's action as the College was required to have a Chief Accounting Officer in order to secure its funding.

6.4

Approved: the appointment of Paul Di Felice as Acting Interim Principal.

6.1

Received: the revised role description and person specification.

Noted: that there did not appear to be any conflict between the comments and the substantive, however there was a query over the wording of the first bullet point under the second heading.

Noted: that the wording 'Have proven experience of work as a Chief Executive Officer' excluded any internal progression. The wording 'Be able to demonstrate capability of working at the level of Chief Executive Officer' was suggested and agreed.

Approved: the revised role description and person specification.

6.2

Received: the timeline for recruiting the new Principal

Approved: the timeline for recruiting the new Principal

6.3

Composition of the Selection Panel

Noted: that the panel should consist of no more than five members of the Governing Executive.

Noted: that HR advice was important.

Agreed: that Paul Inman would arrange the assistance of a Brookes University HR professional, free of charge.

Noted: that it was felt to be good practice to also include an external academic advisor.

Approved: the suggestion of contacting the Principal of Northern College or a Principal at a similar level (with advice from the Association of Colleges).

Paul Di Felice re-joined the meeting at 11.05a.m.

7

New constitution for the Ruskin Students Union

Received: the new constitution.

Noted (7.1): that the aim of the new constitution was to be more flexible and viable. The RSU had received advice and help from Anne Hock.

Approved: the new constitution for the Ruskin Students Union.

8

Meeting dates for the next academic year

Received: the meeting dates for the next academic year

Approved: the meeting dates for the next academic year.

9 Internal Audit Report on Governance

Received: the Internal Audit Report on Governance.

Noted (9.1): that this was a significant report on governance at the College, that discussed modernising the process, including the size and structure of the governing body.

Noted (9.2): that the Search Committee recommended an away-day for the Governing Executive to discuss the report and its findings to be facilitated by an external facilitator.

Approved: the recommendation of the Search Committee. Clerk to canvas availability and arrange a date.

Clerk

10 Charity Commission Annual Return

Received: the Charity Commission Annual Return.

Noted: that the figures were taken from the audited and approved accounts and that the substantive figures would not change.

Noted: that after review some of the figures may move from one heading to another.

Approved: the Charity Commission Annual Return.

POLICIES

11 Risk Management Policy

Received: the Risk Management Policy

Noted (11.1): that the policy had been approved pro-tem by the Audit Committee. The Committee wished to look at the risk management system within the College. It felt that not enough information on the progression of risks was provided by the current system, which needed to be strengthened and tightened.

Approved: the Risk Management Policy as approved pro-tem by the Audit Committee.

Elaine Nicholls joined the meeting at 11.34

12 Harassment Policy and Procedure

Received: the Harassment Policy and Procedure.

Noted (12.1): that the new policy followed legislation, best practice and ACAS guidelines.

Approved: the Harassment Policy and Procedure.

13 Equality and Diversity Policy

Received: the revised Equality and Diversity Policy.

Noted (13.1): that the current College policy was out of date and too long. The new policy covered the nine protected characteristics and applied to both staff and students.

Noted (13.2) that governors would discuss individual responsibility for policies at the July meeting.

Noted (13.3): that equality statistics for staff had been collated and would be

published each April. They would be reported to the Governing Executive. An equality and diversity questionnaire had been created for governors and would be distributed after the meeting. Governors were asked to complete and return to the Clerk.

Noted (13.4): a query about item 6.7 Transgender Status-students were not included in the line "...Ruskin will take positive steps to support staff that plan to undergo..." The wording would be checked.

Approved: the Equality and Diversity Policy with the necessary checks made as per note 13.4.

14 Recruitment and Selection Policy

Received: the Recruitment and Selection Policy

Noted (14.1): that the policy followed best practice and included safe recruitment and safeguarding.

Noted (14.2): that anonymised shortlisting was not specified. All those likely to join interview panels would be appropriately trained in equality and diversity before they were allowed to recruit.

Noted (14.3): that the reference on page 3 to closing applications before the date originally advertised should be removed.

Noted (14.4): that the principles alluded to on the first page of the policy should apply to all posts with no exceptions.

Agreed: that the policy should be approved pro tem and used as guidance in the process of appointing a new Principal, subject to revised version returning to Governing Executive.

It was agreed that item 16 be taken next

16 Capability Policy and Procedure

Received: the Capability Policy and Procedure.

Noted (16.1): that the policy looked at the impact of ill health on performance in the workplace.

Noted (16.2): that the policy was supportive of staff that were absent due to ill health, and any termination of employment on grounds of incapability would require the approval of the management team.

Noted (16.3): a discussion around the time frame contained in point 6.3. It was generally agreed that five working days was the norm for in such cases.

Approved: the Capability Policy and Procedure.

15 Events and Speakers Policy

Received: a verbal update on the Events and Speakers Policy.

Noted (15.1): that this policy in particular related to safeguarding and to the concept of a safe campus.

Noted (15.2): that the policy was being written in consultation with UCU through the JNC.

Noted (15.3): that the completed policy would be brought to the July meeting of the Governing Executive.

17 Equality and Diversity Audit of Governing Executive and Council

Noted (17.1): a query raised about the governing executive update training listed under mandatory training on page 2. The Clerk would seek clarification.

Clerk

An electronic version of the audit questions would be sent out by the Clerk.

Clerk

MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORTS AND SPECIAL ITEMS

18 Chair's Update

Received: a verbal report from the Chair on recent engagement.

Noted (18.1): that during the Chair's six weekly visits to the College, she had discussed various issues with students, including the standards of accommodation and cleaning of the bedrooms. The latter was discussed at the Finance Committee in April and would be followed up at the meeting in June. She had also undertaken a difficult conversation with a student on a short course who held racist views that were clearly unacceptable to the College.

Noted (18.2): that the Chair had completed the Principal's performance review before his untimely death. The Clerk's review was still to be completed.

Noted (18.3): that the Chair had visited Abingdon & Witney College and met with their Chair of Governors. A return visit would be arranged to Ruskin.

Noted (18.4): Roger McKenzie thanked the Chair for her work immediately after the death of the Principal. He asked to be assured on how the College would deal with any instances of racism that may arise.

Noted (18.5): that the Acting Interim Principal replied that the College always investigated any complaints, concerns or issues of racism. Both the issue and the outcome were reported through the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC). If the issue occurred on a union course it would be reported to the appropriate official.

19

Acting Interim Principal's report

Received: a report from the Acting Interim Principal (AIP) on current issues

Noted (19.1): that the AIP thanked colleagues on the Governing Executive for their ongoing support and welcomed Lawrence Vincent.

Noted (19.2): the delivery of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) allocation was a key issue for the College with the 50% decrease in trade union funding. The College would be looking for a higher return on teaching hours through longer courses in the FE sector. The College was committed to the trade union movement and was in discussions with affiliates and looking to deliver more blended learning and work based models. In higher education the College would look to embed a new delivery model and review teaching hours on all newly validated programmes.

Noted (19.3): that the College was looking at working with Abingdon & Witney College on such areas as Human Resources, Marketing and IT. Ruskin could provide a progression route for students from Abingdon & Witney.

Noted (19.4): partnership working with the SDIs was continuing. A paper on the importance of the SDIs place in the economy and the education sector would be launched at a parliamentary reception on 6th July.

Noted (19.5): that the AIP continued to meet with trade union colleagues, and that the College was undertaking a project with the TUC in Islington, where it would deliver a core programme. The location offered potential recruitment opportunities within the surrounding housing estate.

Noted (19.6): that the College was required to deliver the Recovery Plan to the SFA, and must deliver the allocation. The College had sub-contracted some work. Any clawback from the HEFCE audit of 2013/14 students was likely to be less than

anticipated.

Noted (19.7): student retention was good. Two students had secured places at prestigious universities to continue their studies. Student recruitment was 9% less than last year. A number of students were awaiting interview. The College was hoping to hold evening interviews in addition to those during the day in order to facilitate the process. The College would also work with partners to increase recruitment and was about to engage an outreach officer (0.5 post).

Wendy Dawson left the meeting at 12.25p.m

Noted (19.8): that it would be useful to know how many partnerships had been created and to look at them in strategic terms and to gain clarity about direction.

Noted (19.9): that the College was aiming not to subcontract any FE work next year.

Noted (19.10): Partnership working may form part of the agenda for the away-day.

20

Strategic Action Plan 2015/16

Received: the Strategic Action Plan Monitoring Report

Noted (20.1): that the College was on track to deliver the financial aims, was radicalising the delivery of the curriculum, had reviewed governance and was in the process of completing appraisals.

Noted (20.2): that under strategic aim “establish a development office in order to maximise income streams”, the RAG rating was listed as green. This should be amber as although the Development Officer was in post, income streams had not been maximised.

Noted (20.1): students would discuss the café ratings with the Finance Director.

21

KPI Framework

Received: an updated KPI framework.

Noted (21.1): that the College needed to be more analytical in its RAG ratings, in order to increase its value as a tool. Further refinement of the RAG ratings was needed.

Noted (21.2): a question about the ‘Ruskin threshold’ as noted in line 54. This referred to the Observation Scheme and was a set of criteria against which judgements were assessed.

22

Student Diversity Data

This paper would appear on the agenda for the July meeting.

23

Ofsted Inspection

Received: a verbal update on preparation for an Ofsted Inspection.

Noted (23.1): that as the last inspection returned a ‘Good’ grade; the College was expecting a two day ‘light touch’ inspection. If this returned the same grade, there would be no further action, if not a full inspection would occur.

Noted (23.2): that quality and standards were overall good, but that there was work to do around the central records (which was noted in item 5).

Noted (23.3): governors would require Disclosure and Barring Service checks. The Clerk would check the process with the management team secretary and let governors know what they needed to do.

Clerk

24

Finance Director's Report

Received: a report on the financial position to the end of March 2016.

Noted (24.1): that the College had met the SFA's 'Satisfactory' grade for most of the year. Student numbers were 9% up on target and teaching costs were well contained. A surplus of £260K before depreciation against a budgeted surplus of £136k was forecast. A ratio of 3:1 was forecast on the bank covenant.

Noted (24.2): that the provision made for HEFCE in the accounts for 2014/15 should not be needed in its entirety. This would be confirmed by the end of May.

Noted (24.3): students from the University of Hertfordshire on placements at the John Radcliffe Hospital had been using vacant bedrooms. Biko Hall of Residence had been re-decorated, and re-decoration was planned for Webb. More resident language students were expected at the language schools this year.

Bridget Ng'andu left the meeting at 1.04p.m.

Noted (24.4): that the Finance Committee had agreed that the College could undertake the process of procurement for outsourcing the cleaning contract. The results of the process would return to the Finance Committee in June.

Noted (24.5): that the Finance Committee had discussed the possibility of converting at least some of the College's loan into a loan from a trade union/s. The union/s would take over part of the loan as an investment, which would give the College more stability in terms of the loan.

25

Draft Budget for 2016/17

Received: the draft budget for 2016/17.

Noted: that the key risks in the budget were the SFA allocation, tuition fees and the cost of Visiting Tutors. The full budget would return to the Governing Executive July meeting.

The meeting broke for lunch from 1.15p.m.-2.00p.m.

COMMITTEE AND GOVERNANCE ITEMS TO RECEIVE.

26

Minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2016

Agreed: that the minutes formed a true and correct record with the following amendments; - remove 'self-funding' from item 27; Paul Inman to be added to the list of attendees.

27

Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

Finance Committee

28

Received: the draft minutes of the Finance Committee held on April 29th 2016

Noted: that the committee approved the tender for the cleaning contract and suggested the transfer of loans to unions.

29

Draft Access Agreement

Received: the draft access agreement for 2016/17

Noted: that the agreement had been taken to the Finance Committee and had been approved as a plan by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). The report showed how the College used fees to give wider access for students.

30 Audit Committee

Received: the draft minutes of the Audit Committee held on March 11th 2016.

31 Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)

Received: the draft minutes of the AQSC held on 6th November 2015.

32 Search Committee

Received: the draft minutes of the Search Committee held on 20th April 2016.

STANDING ITEMS

33 Student governor report

Received: a report on the work of the Ruskin Student Union.

Noted: that all students were thanked for their participation in the QAA Review.

34 Meeting dates

Noted: meeting dates for the remainder of the academic year

- 1st July 2016 at 10.30a.m

Peter Dwyer left the meeting at 2.10p.m.

There being no further business Part A of the meeting closed at 2.10pm

Signed by the Chair of the meeting succeeding that to which these minutes pertain

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