

Ruskin College

GOVERNING EXECUTIVE

**Minutes of the five hundred and fifty-seventh meeting of the
Governing Executive held on Friday 2 July 2010 at
11.00am at Stoke House, Old Headington**

Present:	Jane Dixon John Fray Anne Hock Elcena Jeffers Kit Johnson (part) Jo Morris David Norman (Chair) (part) Carole Orgell-Rosen Pearl Ryall Audrey Mullender Kieron Winters Nigel Williams	In attendance:	Sally Courtney Rebecca Cox (minutes) Hilda Kean Chris Wilkes
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PART A

- 1 Apologies for absence and welcome new members** Action
The Vice-Chair opened the meeting, as David Norman had been delayed in traffic. Apologies were received from Mike Bradley, Ruth Hunt, Liz Mathews, Teresa Munby, Pam Johnson and Chris Baugh, and David Norman for late arrival. Elcena Jeffers, RSU representative, was welcomed to her first meeting and formally elected as a Governing Executive member.
- 2 Absent**
Jan Etienne, Doug Nicholls and Pamela Roberts 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 14 May 2010.

(Kit Johnson joined the meeting at 11.04am.)
- 5 Matters arising**
Funding for the Capital Project
Received: tabled report on funding newly available from the Skills Funding Agency.
Noted: that it had just been announced that additional funding was being made available to those 130 colleges who had not previously had more than £5m from the LSC for funding for capital projects. Part of the money had been allocated evenly between the colleges, who would be required to apply for it and prove that certain criteria were satisfied. The remainder would be bid for competitively. For each, the funding would have to be put towards a project that had not already been approved,

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and colleges would have to be able to fund a specific proportion themselves. It was proposed that funding for a 'Walled Garden Project' should be applied for, as some work had already been carried out which had not been previously reported. Similar gardening projects had been established in the Oxford area and the College was already planning to involve local people in developing and maintaining the walled garden. Applications would need to be submitted by the end of July.

Approved: that an application should be lodged with the SFA for an Enhanced Renewal Grant, up to the maximum available value, in respect of the Walled Garden Project. In the light of advice received from David Hughes of the SFA, the College should argue that its commitment of funds up to £1,550,000 was already being far exceeded in the current redevelopment project, but that the SFA's contribution of up to £775,000 would fund work additional to the scheme already approved. Given the tight timescale, the Governing Executive approved the Walled Garden Project in principle and would undertake detailed monitoring through the normal channels should the application succeed and the work proceed.

Noted: a suggestion that the College should consider approaching the Oxford Funding Network, a local organisation which funds social projects like the proposed Walled Garden Project. The Principal welcomed the suggestion and would talk to Jo Morris outside of the meeting and take this forward.

AM

6 Matters held over from meeting held on 14 May 2010

Received: paper detailing those items which had not been considered at the meeting held on 14 May 2010 that had been adjourned once it became inquorate.

Approved: all items as detailed in the report.

7 Finance Committee

7.1 **Received:** minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 18 June 2010.

Noted: that there were no questions or comments that would not be addressed under other items.

(David Norman joined the meeting at 11.23am and took the chair.)

7.2 **Received:** a contingency plan for the repayment of the loan for the Capital Project.

Noted: the General Secretary presented the report, which had been prepared at the request of the last meeting of the Governing Executive, and had been recommended to today's meeting by the Finance Committee. The contingency plan proposed that risk in the short and medium term, when the College would be making interest only payments on the loan, should be managed within the College's financial and risk management plans. From 2012, the risk of not being able to meet the repayments would increase significantly, as the capital would start to be repaid then, and, if business were not being generated as planned or income affected by cuts in funding, it would be at this point that a contingency plan might need to be implemented. The sale of Stoke House was cited as the ultimate contingency plan, though all other possible options would be considered to determine the best course of action at that time. The bank was currently undertaking valuations of most of the College's assets, so a clearer idea of their value would shortly be available. All agreed that the key factor would be to make the College's business plan a success, so that the contingency plan would not be required.

Approved: the contingency plan.

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- 7.3 Received:** a report on the financial position to the end of April 2010.
Noted: that the current financial position was not sustainable and the Finance Director had identified the key problem areas and issues which would need to be addressed in planning for next year.
- 7.4 Received:** the draft budget for the year to 31 July 2011.
Noted: that the draft budget had been discussed in detail at the Finance Committee meeting on 18 June. As tuition fee income had been the biggest problematic area in previous years, it had been agreed there that further work should be carried out with each cost centre to obtain accurate student numbers, as far as possible, in order to put together a realistic budget. Some work on this had been undertaken, but there was more to be carried out. Currently, the budgeted position at the end of the year was an operational surplus of £30K.
Noted: the suggestion that the College should be more aggressive in attracting students and informing people about the courses offered. A lengthy discussion about the marketing of Ruskin ensued, in which a number of key issues were raised. The Principal outlined the work the College was doing currently, both internally through the Outreach and Recruitment Committee and through a small PR company, and stressed the need for Ruskin's marketing to be targeted towards the groups it wished to reach. A number of suggestions were made, including becoming involved with newly formed national networks and online forums; the use of new technologies; approaching employers likely to be making redundancies; advertising in Connexions Centres; and maximising media coverage of the redevelopment to promote the improvements being made. It was noted that Ruskin had been through a period where it had not been successful due to its poor facilities and that there would be a re-launch event held in the newly developed buildings. In the meantime, the Principal would follow up the suggestions made today, and an item would be included on the agenda for the next Council meeting which would allow members an opportunity to become involved in how Ruskin should be marketed in the future. AM
 Clerk
Approved: the draft budget for the year to 31 July 2011, subject to the further work on tuition fee income discussed.
- 8 Audit Committee**
Received: minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 11 June 2010.
Noted: that the Joint Audit Code of Practice would be re-drafted by the SFA in the next 18 months and would be brought through Audit Committee. The Chair of Audit Committee had been approached to see whether a student representative could become a member of the Audit Committee. There were currently no vacancies, but it was planned to contact those whose attendance had been poor to determine whether they wished to retain their place. The auditors had noted that the annual health and safety report to the Governing Executive did not include a report on the gas certificates, which is a legal requirement and would be rectified next time.
- 9 Project Board**
- 9.1 Received:** minutes of the Project Board meeting held on 14 May 2010.
- 9.2 Received:** minutes of the Project Board meeting held on 18 June 2010.
Noted: that, subsequent to this meeting, planning permission had been granted for the Academic Building and the full funding and planning package for the Capital Project was now in place.
- 9.3 Approved:** terms of reference for the Project Board.
- 9.4 Received:** full tender report from Davis Langdon

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- Noted:** that this document detailed the work undertaken by the project managers during the tendering for Phase 1A/B and Phase 1C/D to ensure that the process was carried out thoroughly and within the College's Financial Regulations. The tenders for Phase 2 would go through a full European tendering process and a report would be brought to Governing Executive in due course.
- 9.5 Received:** the updated strategic risk register for Phase 1.
Noted: that only one risk, that of a VAT increase, was highlighted as red and the College had already accounted for this in the budget for the redevelopment. This risk register was under constant review, as were those more detailed registers that sat behind this document. The strategic risk register for Phase 2 would be brought to the next meeting. Clerk
- 10 Policy review**
Received: Whistleblowing Policy (held over from the last meeting).
Noted: that the policy had been reviewed and only minor amendments made to factual information on names and organisations.
Approved: the Whistleblowing Policy.
- 11 Annual update of strategic plan**
Received: report on strategic aims.
Noted: the Principal introduced the item, drawing members' attention to the Learning and Skills Improvement Service's Venn diagram model of governance included in the report. Historically, the College had focused on governance for representation and democracy and, more recently, on governance for accountability and compliance. Ruskin was not currently as strong on the third component, governance for maximising institutional performance and success, which had been noted during recent inspections. Ideally, the College would now aim for governance that balanced the three components. A new software package, Qlikview, was shortly to be introduced, which had been tailored to meet Ruskin's needs and would enable a great deal more monitoring data to be brought to future meetings. The General Secretary summarised how the strategic aims were to be reconceptualised to link in with this model of governance. They had been categorised into finance and risk, learning and teaching, residence and catering, and estates, and the Governing Executive agenda had been similarly amended to illustrate how items related to the strategic aims. The report outlined the aims, the related policies and how these were currently monitored. It was noted that concrete performance indicators had yet to be allocated to each of the aims, and these would be worked on over the summer. The five year strategic plan was due to be updated in 2011. It was previously developed through a half-day SWOT exercise at Council.
Agreed: that a similar exercise should be arranged in 2011. Clerk
- 12 Annual Governing Executive self-assessment exercise**
Received: a self-assessment form which those present were asked to complete and return to the Clerk at the end of the meeting. Feedback would be brought to the next meeting.
- 13 Academic Quality and Standards Committee**
Received: the minutes of Part A of the meeting held on 18 June 2010.
Noted: in particular, the action plan relating to the Developmental Engagement in assessment which demonstrated how monitoring of both the recommendations and maintaining the positive points were embedded across the College. The Chair

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welcomed the professional approach outlined by the Dean.

14 Principal's report

Received: a report from the Principal.

Noted: that John Hayes MP, Minister of State (Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning), was to visit Ruskin in the autumn, as were officers from BIS in a separate visit. In terms of curriculum, following changes in funding, there would be a number of FE courses that the College would not be able to run from next year. A new 'Full Level 2' course, Certificate in Lifelong Learning for Work and Study, was being devised, which, it was hoped, would be launched in January and become the main progression route onto HE courses. It would also offer the opportunity to restructure the Ransackers course, although funding rules would mean some students would not be eligible, and the name might not be able to be used due to an issue regarding intellectual property rights which the Principal was currently looking into.

15 Student representative's report

Received: verbal report from the RSU President on the work of the Ruskin Students' Union.

Noted: that the RSU was successfully up and running, with all but one of the Executive roles filled. Its financial position was improved following the discovery of a dormant bank account containing £6K. It had had a busy year, reforging links with the Trades Council and local organisations and increasing involvement in political protests. The Red Ball had been a success and had come in under budget. Work was currently being undertaken producing welcome packs for new students to encourage people to become involved with the RSU from the start, and social events were to be organised for the first week of term. There had been a number of concerns arising from the redevelopment work at Headington, but no major issues. The RSU planned to talk to the Management Team regarding speeding up disciplinary procedures for students. It was noted that Kit Johnson did not plan to stand for re-election as President and the Chair thanked him for his valuable contributions to the committees this year.

16 Meeting dates for 2010/11

Noted: meeting dates for the next academic year, all at 11.00am at Walton Street:

- 26 November 2010
- 11 March 2011
- 20 May 2011
- 8 July 2011

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.43pm.