

GOVERNING EXECUTIVE

Minutes of Part A of the five hundred and seventy-eighth meeting of the Governing Executive held on Friday 20th November at 11.00am at Ruskin College, Dunstan Road, Old Headington, Oxford, OX3 9BZ

Present:

Carole Orgell-Rosen **CO-R** Chair (ordinary member)
Alan Shepherd **AS** Vice-Chair (ordinary member)
Van Coulter **VC** (ordinary member)
Neil Crew **NC** (ordinary member)
Wendy Dawson **WD** (ordinary member) *part*
Rob Hancock **RH** (ordinary member) *part*
Anne Hock **AH** (ordinary member)
Peter Dwyer **PD** (staff member)
Bridget Ng'andu **BN** (staff member)
Chris Wilkes **CW** Principal (staff member)
Kieron Winters **KW** (staff member)
Lisa Birch **LB** (student member)

In attendance:

Sally Courtney **SC** (Finance Director)
Paul Di Felice **PDF** (Vice-Principal) *part*
Helen Jeffries (Clerk)

PART A

- 1 Apologies for absence** Action
Apologies were received from: Chris Baugh, Paul Inman, Roger McKenzie, Jo Morris, Doug Nicholls, Pearl Ryall, Harriet Bradley and Miriam David.
- 2 Declarations of interest**
Rob Hancock declared an interest as a member of the TUC.
- 3 Governance**
Received: the Search Committee recommendations for Governing Executive.
Noted (3.1): that after a review of the recent Skills Audit, the Search Committee recommended that Neil Crew (Aegis) and Paul Roberts (Aspire Oxford) be appointed as Governors.
Noted (3.2): that Paul Roberts was not able to become a governor at this point.
Approved: the appointment of Neil Crew as governor.
Noted (3.3): that the Search Committee also recommended that Chris Baugh (PCS) return as a governor, and that Van Coulter, Anne Hock, Peter Dwyer, Bridget Ng'andu and Kieron Winters be appointed for a further term.
Approved: the re-appointment of Chris Baugh and the further terms for Van Coulter, Anne Hock, Peter Dwyer, Bridget Ng'andu and Kieron Winters.

Noted (3.4): that the Search Committee further recommended that Lisa Birch be appointed as a student governor.

Approved: the appointment of Lisa Birch as a student governor.

MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORTS AND SPECIAL ITEMS

4 FE Commissioner's Letter

Received: the FE Commissioner's letter about area reviews and the re-shaping of the FE sector.

Noted (4.1): that the letter gave a strong message about area reviews, and pointed out that it was for governing bodies to determine whether or not they accepted the reviews recommendations.

Noted (4.2): that the Thames Valley Review would happen between January and April 2016. Ruskin College was not to be included within the review.

Noted (4.3): that although the College was excluded from the review it should be cognisant of the consequences of it. The Principal would keep the Governing Executive informed of the progress of the review.

Noted (4.4): that the Chair asked for the Executive's approval of a change to the remit of the 6 weekly meeting group (consisting of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Chair of the Finance Committee and senior management), which had been meeting to monitor the Recovery Plan. From January the group would meet to discuss plans for the College going forward, including a development plan for a worst case scenario.

Approved: a change to the remit of the 6 weekly meeting group.

Noted (4.5): that the Chair felt that a clear message was being received from the government that the future of FE lay in apprenticeships.

Noted (4.6): that it was important to be nimble in the current environment and that VC was happy to see from the Principal's report that work was already under way. It was important that adults should be able to re-train because of the current landscape of the labour market. When lobbying he was emphasising that the adult education sector needs to thrive.

Noted (4.7): that the College needed to look for ways in which it could survive and build something new.

Noted (4.8): that the governors must not overlook the successful curriculum review of 2014/15 and that if the College were able to deal with the area review in the same way as it dealt with the recovery plan it would do well.

5. Principal's report

Received: a report from the Principal on current issues

Noted (5.1): that the academic year had started well and that recruitment figures were good. However two programmes were not running because of low numbers.

Paul Di Felice joined the meeting at 11.20am

Noted (5.2): that the College had made good progress against the Recovery Plan and that the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) would no longer need to monitor the Recovery Plan in the way that it had been doing. The College was on course to be in 'Satisfactory' financial health by the end of the financial year.

Noted (5.3): The Co-operative bank had indicated that it would provide an overdraft facility. The College was awaiting formal notification of this.

Noted (5.4): the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement was due on 25th

November and may include the loss or severe reduction of the Adult Skills Budget. The Specialist Designated Institutions would be meeting with the Minister for Skills on 10th December to discuss this.

Noted (5.5): a senior civil servant from the department of Business, Innovation and skills (BIS) had requested a visit to the College in order to see how the College was delivering government priorities. The College would involve students in the visit.

Noted (5.6): that the quality priority in 2015/16 was the visit from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

Noted (5.7): that the Principal attended a meeting on 4th November to discuss the county's skills devolution proposal, and that there was potential for Ruskin as a member of the Oxfordshire Skills Board to help shape opportunities for meeting the skills needs of local employers. A decision was expected on devolution in early December.

Noted (5.8): that the College has started to deliver the Communication Workers Union (CWU) national education programme at Alvescot and delivered environmental and health and safety courses for De La Rue and Tarmac Lafarge. The courses had been well received and more courses had been requested.

Noted (5.9): that the College was increasing its capacity in this area by employing a Development Officer (after Christmas) and two 0.5 Trade Union Research and Curriculum Development Officers.

Noted (5.10): that the College had employed a marketing consultant to work on the marketing of the HE side of the College. The consultant would report on a marketing strategy before Christmas and would then begin work on the second phase of the project to increase the numbers of HE students at the College.

Noted (5.11): that the College needed to continue the pace of change and take up opportunities when possible.

6 Vice-Principal's report

Received: a report from the Vice-Principal on teaching, learning and assessment.

Noted (6.1): that the College had been working on the Self-Evaluation Document for the Higher Education Review in March 2016.

Noted (6.2): that the College was using a revised observation process that was primarily developmental and included a differentiated approach for HE and FE. Two extra moderators had been engaged to strengthen the process. The observations profile continued to be high. The College had a significant number of 'good' or 'better' teachers.

Noted (6.3): that staff development had focused on equality, diversity and safeguarding. The Personal Review and Staff Appraisal scheme had been introduced, linked to staff development.

Noted (6.4): that success rates were high. The Access to HE diploma gained a 93% success rate which was above national benchmarks. Retention rates had increased.

Noted (6.5): that the College was working on the development of a new BA (Hons) programme in Applied Social Sciences and a review of the BA (Hons) ILTUS programme. The BA (Hons) Youth Work and Community Development and the Practice Educator Professional Standards were due to be revalidated.

Noted (6.6): that further discussions were taking place around the move towards semesters, and that the College was looking at more flexible ways of working. Semesters would enable more flexible use of the College estate.

Noted (6.7): that the National Student Survey had placed the College at 91% for

overall satisfaction. This was significantly above other FE providers and in the top 25% of HE institutions. The College launched the '7 Ways to Have Your Say' campaign, which resulted in the establishment of the Student Committee in October.

Noted (6.8): that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee (a sub-committee of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee) was student led

Noted (6.9): that as a Residential College, safeguarding was a priority issue. The Vice-Principal and the Academic Registrar met with residential students on a regular basis. All staff attended Prevent Duty training and it was intended that governors (who were required to be aware of the issues) would be trained through an online course or a briefing at a meeting.

Noted (6.10): that online training would be more financially effective.

Agreed: that the Clerk would send out a link to the online training course on Prevent Duty. Clerk

Noted (6.11): that the Student Committee had met twice in this term, and would hold at least one meeting in the next term.

Noted (6.12): that any concerns around safeguarding must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer.

7 Chair's report

Received: a verbal update on recent engagement.

Noted (7.1): that the Chair visited College every six weeks in order to engage with students, holding a two hour session in the café during which she discussed issues with the students but was very clear about the boundaries of governance. This engagement had resulted in contacts with students who might be able to help with marketing and with military contacts in order for the College to work with veteran's organisations on re-training. It had been a pleasure to see how student's confidence grew over a short space of time. The Vice-Chair would join the Chair next term. The Chair of the Finance Committee had been working with the student union on elections.

Noted (7.2): that VC would send the Chair contact details for the military education committee. VC

Noted (7.3): that Ruskin College had provided education for former forces members throughout its history and that demand was so great after WWII that the current site was purchased.

8 Recovery Plan Update

Received: an update on the recovery plan action plan

Noted: that this was the third version and that many of the items were completed. Any outstanding items would move forward to the Strategic Plan.

9 Strategic Plan

Received: the strategic action points and action plan for 2015/16.

Noted (9.1): that a consultant had been engaged to work with staff on team building and 'moving on together'.

Noted (9.2): that the Internal Auditors had produced a project scope for a project on governance structures and that the Clerk was working on self-assessment of governance benchmarked against the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges.

Noted (9.3): that an update of the plan would be brought to each meeting of the Governing Executive.

Noted (9.4): a question regarding a guidance note on the Radical Research Unit in order to promote the Unit. The Principal would provide details.

Noted (9.5): that it was useful to cross-reference this document with the risk management plan, which would show how the College would defend itself against any risks associated with the Strategic Plan.

10 Annual report and accounts

10.1 Received: the financial statement auditor's management letter for the year ended 31 July 2015, including the regularity audit.

Noted (10.1i): that there were four issues outstanding from the audit.

- The College was chasing the bank for a formal written agreement on an overdraft facility.
- The auditors required confirmation from the SFA on the methodology used to allocate student support funds-the auditors were in discussion with the SFA. The College had spoken to a contact at the SFA, who was happy to talk to the auditors and could provide an archive of e-mails on the subject.
- The restricted reserves needed to be shown in a different way within the accounts, making £180k available as cash.
- HEFCE clawback issues needed to be resolved. The Finance Director was working with HEFCE to quantify the amount and discuss a payment plan.

10.2 Received: the annual report and accounts and the audit representations letter for the year ended 31 July 2015

Noted (10.2i): that it was very important that the accounts were signed off at the AGM on 4th December. The College could find itself in difficulties with the SFA if they did not receive the accounts by 31st December.

Noted (10.2ii): that the annual report and accounts could be recommended in draft subject to sign off by the auditors. The figures would not change but debits and credits would need to be shown on the HEFCE line.

Noted (10.2iii): that Audit Committee had asked for the accounts to be finalised by 4th December and that pressure needed to be applied to the auditors. It was felt that the audit plan was not as tight as it should have been and that management had worked very hard, but not gained the required level of understanding from the auditors. The external member of the Audit Committee had commented that he would expect the auditors to work with the College. The Chair of the Finance Committee felt that it was unhelpful of the auditors to raise issues in this way at this time.

Agreed: that the Governing Executive would meet at 10.30 before the AGM in order to recommend the annual report and accounts to the AGM.

Noted (10.2iv): that the Chair of the Audit Committee pointed out particular areas of interest on pages 19, 20 and 23 of the management letter covering emerging issues.

11

Finance Directors report

Received: a report on the financial position to end September 2015.

Noted (11.1): that the number of students enrolled exceeded the targets set, and the number of HE enrolments had increased by 14%. The College would eventually

receive over £1.9m in tuition fees from Student Finance England (SFE).

Noted (11.2): that occupancy levels in the residential blocks were lower than anticipated. However the College had been able to offer the vacant places to students at the John Radcliffe Hospital, and hoped to be able to do the same in the spring.

Noted (11.3): that the new catering arrangements had been in place since the beginning of September. Trading figures were on target after the first full month. Feedback had been good. A Development Group had been set up that included staff, students and café staff.

POLICIES

- 12** **Received:** the Grievance Procedure for Senior Postholders
Noted: that the College's HR consultant had reviewed both this and the Guidance re. Grievances Against Senior Postholders (13). The Procedure had been simplified.
Approved: the Grievance Procedure for Senior Postholders
- 13** **Received:** the Guidance re Grievances Against Senior Postholders
Noted (13.1): concerns about the removal of the time period in which to appeal at 4.1 of the Guidance. It was felt that a timescale was needed.
Noted (13.2): that it was reasonable to set a time limit, and that it could be deferred if necessary.
Approved: the Guidance re Grievances Against Senior Postholders with the reinstatement of the 5 working days timescale under item 4.1.
- 14** **Received:** the Statement of Ethical Mission for Research
Noted (14.1): that the receipt of the Statement was timely as the College looked to participate in more research.
Noted (14.2): that the Statement covered confidentiality, risk awareness, conduct and types of research.
Approved: the Statement of Ethical Mission for Research
- 15** **Received:** the Health and Safety Policy
Noted: that the policy had been revised through the Health and Safety Committee.
Approved: the Health and Safety Policy
- 16** **Received:** Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
Noted (16.1): that item 4 was taken from the Prevent Duty document and reflected the current prominence of the issue.
Noted (16.2): that the Oxford Safeguarding Board had recommended the inclusion of a section on allegations and complaints against staff. The section noted the difference between allegations and complaints and reflected practice in the public sector.
Noted (16.3): that a section on Whistleblowing was also included.
Noted (16.4): that a reference should be made to the grievance policies/procedures as related policies.
Noted (16.5): that the County Council had recently launched a campaign based around "See Something-Say Something", which it was hoped would facilitate more communication with the appropriate authorities.

Agreed: that the College would put up posters for this campaign.

Approved: with the addition of the amendment noted at 16.4.

- 17** **Received:** the Safeguarding Children Policy
Noted (17.1): that the policy covered those who were 18 and under, including visiting children. The College hosted English as a Foreign Language (EFL) schools outside term time and needed to ensure that due diligence was followed by the providers.
Noted (17.2): that the policy reflected the same concerns around Prevent Duty as the Safeguarding Adults at Risk policy, and also included a section on allegations made against staff.
Approved: the Safeguarding Children Policy
- 18** Sexual, Racial and Personal Harassment Procedure
Noted: that this procedure would be on the agenda for the March meeting.
- 19** **Received:** the Student Drug Policy
Noted (19.1): that the only change was on page 3.
Noted (19.2): that the policy emphasised zero tolerance on drug use. Students on site may have gone through a recovery process, so the policy was important.
Noted (19.3): that the policy should include reference to “legal highs”, which were sometimes more hazardous than organic drugs.
Approved: the Student Drug Policy with the addition of a reference to “legal highs”.
- Agreed:** to take item 30 next on the agenda.
- 30** **Received:** a proposal from the Ruskin College Students Union
Noted: that under the terms of the Education Act, the Governing Executive was required to approve changes to the Union constitution.
Approved: the proposals contained within the paper.

Wendy Dawson left the meeting at 1.05pm

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

- 20** **Finance and Risk**
- 20.1** **Received:** the Risk Management Annual Report 2014/15
- 20.2** **Received:** the Risk Management Plan
The two items were taken together.
Noted (20.1): that the Annual Report was in the old format and looked at the old strategic plan.
Noted (20.2): that the Plan looked forward but was for 2015/16 only. This should be viewed with the Strategic Plan, thus seeing the risks and benefits side by side.
Noted (20.3): that the only negative point in the Annual Report was that the tuition fee income target was not met. The Chair of the Audit Committee congratulated the management team on meeting the bank covenant.
Approved: the Risk Management Annual Report 2014/15
Approved: the Risk Management Plan.

21 Learning and Teaching

21.1 Received: the Self-Assessment Report grades for FE provision

Noted (21.1i): that individual curriculum areas had performed self-assessment and provided draft grades. The final report would be taken to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) on 11th December.

Noted (21.1ii): that the report highlighted the College's strengths in exemplary additional learning support practice.

Noted (21.1iii): that a disproportionate number of male students attended trade union courses as opposed to female students. A large number of women worked in the care sectors and were unable to take time off to attend courses.

Noted (21.1iv): that some unions that Ruskin worked with were almost entirely made up of male workers and that therefore there was only so much that Ruskin could do in this area.

Noted (21.1v): that the way in which minority groups were identified may need to change.

Approved: the Self-Assessment Report grades for FE provision

21.2 Received: the draft Self-Evaluation Document for the QAA Review

Noted (21.2i): that the document had already been amended to a more concise version and that the paper before the Executive was a first draft. Additional information had been added around the key challenges for the College.

Noted (21.2ii): that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was looking for management insight within this document. Page 39 highlighted the achievements of the College.

Approved: the draft Self-Evaluation Document for the QAA Review

Noted: that the Vice-Chair praised the staff for their hard work and excellent attitude.

Agreed: that a letter should be sent to all staff thanking them for the work over the past year.

COMMITTEE AND GOVERNANCE ITEMS TO RECEIVE

22 Minutes of the previous meeting of the Governing Executive

Received: the minutes of the Governing Executive meeting held on 3 July 2015

Confirmed: as a correct record the minutes of Part A of the meeting held on 3 July 2015.

23 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

The meeting broke for lunch at 1.20pm. Rob Hancock left the meeting.

The meeting re-convened at 1.50pm. The meeting was now inquorate.

24 Audit Committee

24.1 Received: the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on November 6th.

24.2 Received: the Audit Committee Annual Report 2014/15

The Chair of the Audit Committee drew the governors attention to the following points;

Noted (24.2i): that the financial statement auditors Baker Tilly were re-named RSM UK

Noted (24.2ii): that the Joint Audit Code of Practice (JSCOP) had been expanded. The financial statement auditor would no longer give an opinion on regularity, but would now give a conclusion. JACOP was now one document rather than in two parts.

Noted (24.2iii): the Audit Committee Opinion at section 11 of the report.

24.3 Received: the Internal audit Annual Report 2014/15

Noted: that the report looked both forward and back, and was important as showing the added value of internal audit to the College.

25 Finance Committee

Received: the minutes of the Finance Committee held on October 23rd

The Chair of the Finance Committee drew the governors attention to the following;

Noted: that the Finance Committee had received an updated valuation for Stoke House including potential as well as current usage. The Committee felt that this was not an appropriate time to discuss any possible sale of Stoke House and that the College should wait until issues around finance became clearer.

26 Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)

26.1 Received: the minutes of the AQSC meeting held on 19th June

26.2 Received: the minutes of the AQSC meeting held on 25th September

Noted: that the minutes reflected the amount of work completed. The Vice-Chair attended an Association of Colleges (AOC) conference on Teaching, Learning and Assessment in October at which it was recommended that the Governing Executive chose ten things to focus on in respect of teaching, learning and assessment in order to achieve a better understanding of the subject.

Noted: that this could be considered by AQSC.

Noted: that it would be useful for all committees to focus on different things. This could be discussed at the Chairs 6 weekly meeting.

27 Governance items

27.1 Received: the minutes of the Search Committee meeting held on November 10th

The following points were noted;

Noted (27.1i): The Search Committee received the results of the Skills Audit-37% return. The Executive and Council achieved high scores on softer skills, but needed more experience in marketing, fundraising, audit and estates and facilities management. The results of the Skills Audit would be used to inform decisions on the membership of Council, Governing Executive and committees.

Noted (27.1ii): the Search Committee approved the following nominations to Council

- Mick Carney-President of the TSSA (Transport Salaried Staff Association)
- John Callow-National Political Officer, soon to add Education GMB
- Paul Roberts- CEO Employment and Partnerships Aspire Oxford
- Neil Crew-Assistant General Secretary Aegis

- Karen Hopwood-Head of Organisational Development Oxford County Council
- Staff members
 - Peter Dwyer
 - Bridget Ng'andu
 - Ed Rooksby
 - Kieron Winters
- Student members
 - Lisa Birch

Noted (27.1iii): The Committee received the resignations of John Fray and Marva Small from the Governing Executive.

Noted (27.1iv): the Search Committee noted Gordon Beesley's intention to step down from the Audit Committee, and that the Chair of the Committee would need to consider a replacement for Gordon and a further vacancy.

Noted (27.1v): the Search Committee received the resignation of John Fray and of Marva Small from the Finance Committee, and agreed that Neil Crew should be appointed to Finance Committee. The Chair of Finance Committee would need to consider possible members.

Noted (27.1vi): that after the review of the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges an action plan would return to the Search Committee. The Internal Auditors project plan for a review of governance structures was received.

Noted (27.1vii): that the Chairs of Committees would take the lead in a project reviewing the policy framework of the College. Volunteers would be needed to review the policies.

27.2 Feedback from the annual self-assessment exercise would be on the agenda of the March meeting.

27.3 **Received:** the Register of Interest form to be returned to the Clerk

28 & 29 GOVERNOR REPORTS

Both governor reports would be heard at Council on 4th December

30 Taken earlier in the meeting

31 Meeting dates

Noted: the meeting dates for this academic year, all at 11.00 am apart from July 1st (10.30am)

- 4th March 2016
- 13th May 2016
- 1st July 2016

RuskinCollege Oxford

GE/578A/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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