



Ruskin College Oxford

B/600/2

Minutes of the five hundred and ninety-ninth meeting of the Board of Trustees held on Friday 10 May 2019 at 11.00am in the Board Room, Ruskin College

Present	In attendance
Doug Nicholls (Chair) Kevin Flanagan (Vice Chair) Theresa Hoenig Paul Inman Mike Parker Peter Pendle Alison Stoecker Paul Di Felice (Principal) Peter Dwyer (Staff Governor)	Rena Rani (Assistant Principal) Ashok Patel (Interim Finance Director) Mark Griggs (Finance Manager) Vinisha Patel (Student Services Manager) Nicki O'Shea (Business Development Manager) Oshor Williams (Observer) John Kirk (Interim Clerk)
	Apologies There were no apologies
	Confirmation of Quorum: Quorum met.

1.	Declarations of Interest	
	1.The Chair and Vice Chair referred to their standing interests of their respective trade unions. 2.Paul Inman was unsure of his status, but the Clark clarified that following the adoption of the new Articles of Association he would be a Trustee. 3.Peter Dwyer asserted that he was attending as a staff governor, not as a trade union governor.	
2.	Governance Matters	
	1. Following the recent election, Doug Nicholls was duly elected Chair of the Board of Trustees. Kevin Flanagan was returned unopposed. Both positions have a term of two years. 2. Two governors had resigned; Anne Hock and Neil Crew. The Board wished to record its thanks to both for their service (the Clerk has already written to them both). 3. There are three governors in prospect, and the Search Committee will meet soon to consider these applications. 4. The Chair encouraged everyone to consider inviting applications for new governors, with particular regard to skills audit analysis and improving the diversity of the Board. 5. The Business Development Manager reported that the new Governor Information Pack had been produced and distributed to OxLEP, the City Council, and other organisations to aid recruitment. Vacancies have also been posted on the Education and Training Foundation website.	
3.	Minutes of the Meeting of 8 March 2019	
	The minutes were approved subject to the following corrections:	

	<p>1. The Chair's remarks be amended to include discussions on governor recruitment and the skills audit (both covered later in the meeting).</p> <p>2. Item 4. Amended to include the Board requested the SAR be formally approved.</p> <p>3. Amended to include a concern raised regarding the Higher Education administration processes in 2017/18</p> <p>4. Item 8. Amended to include agreement that Monthly Management Accounts be made available.</p>	Clerk
4.	Matters Arising	
	<p>1. It was agreed to add to all board papers a list of decision made, when due, and outstanding actions.</p> <p>2. The Board still wished to ensure the SAR be formally approved.</p> <p>3. It was agreed that the Clerk produce reports as provided by the Code of Good Governance.</p> <p>4. The Board requested sight of the Marketing Plan</p> <p>5. It was noted that the Peggy Seeger event would not go ahead as the Community Day had been cancelled.</p> <p>6. The recruitment of a Clerk is still process but with no success as yet.</p> <p>7. There was discussion on the Governor Away Day and it was felt this would be more effective when the board strength had been increased. The Chair said that a paper on the Away Day will come to the next meeting.</p> <p>8. The Job Description for the Student Services Link Governor had not yet been circulated. Clerk to action.</p> <p>9. It was agreed that when draft minutes are circulated following the Board, and amendments be fed back to the Clerk before the next meeting.</p>	<p>Clerk Asst. Principal Clerk Bus Dev Mgr</p> <p>Chair Clerk</p>
5.	Approval of new Articles of Association - Special Resolution	
	<p>1. The Charities Commission had finally approved the new Articles of Association, after the phrase in the 'Objects' was removed and written into the 'Powers'. The Special Resolution GE/599/3b was passed unanimously by the Board and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>2. The Clerk was instructed to ensure the new Articles were implemented at the earliest opportunity.</p>	Clerk
6.	Chair's Report	
	<p>1. The Board received the Chair's Report.</p> <p>2. A paper is to come to the Board on the Friends of Ruskin</p> <p>3. Chris Wilkes Day. This is postponed, probably to the Autumn. Mr Wilkes' widow to be informed.</p> <p>4. The Collective Responsibility Protocol was received as amended, and the Code of Good Governance was adopted by the Board and will be discussed further at the away day.</p> <p>5. Letter and report highlights from the Office for Students were received and discussed. It was noted that the supposed free market in education is now heavily regulated, and projected student numbers generally are not necessarily reliable. Ruskin being a Specialist Designated Institution does not necessarily follow other education trends, so a firm steer</p>	Chair Clerk

	<p>of where to concentrate in the future is vital. Possibilities raised included 18 year olds, international students and other specific cohorts. The Chair noted the Ruskin is very well placed with FE and HE funding available, and numerous allies as an SDI. It is noted that the RCBDP focused upon recruiting adults to HE.</p> <p>6. The Board was alerted to new guidance from the Charities Commission for those receiving external funding. It is expected that Eversheds will provide a synopsis soon.</p>	
7.	Principal's Report and Business update	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The report outlined the College position regarding the FEC Visit on 14 May 2019 2. A significant distance has been travelled in terms of developing SLT, developing the curriculum and stabilising the financial position. 3. There is now a very highly qualified, experienced and professional team as SLT, driving College successes evidenced by the recently published hub report showing 98% success, and all QAR indicators are above benchmark for the sector and in comparison with all other colleges. The QAR data is the equivalent of Ofsted grade of Outstanding. 4. The Matrix highlights the work of the new SLT and the focus of ensuring right student is on right course, along with the progress made by Student Services. 5. The new MIS system is a great improvement, though still requiring work. The IT platform is out of date and will be replaced. This is in hand. 6. Adult Education has grown and the partnership with Abingdon & Witney College is very promising. There is a strong prospect of delivering skills training in many areas to John Radcliffe staff, who have approached us as they are dissatisfied with their current providers. 7. HE is stable and solid, with apprenticeships also looking good as a result of progress with GMB funding. 8. Several partnerships are looking positive including with Kellogg that has a will to develop together with us. We now have links with up to twenty organisations 9. Developing Ruskin as a College of Sanctuary is also gaining ground - another aid to recruitment for those in danger in their own countries. 10. The new website is now live and generally thought to be excellent. The History page is particularly recommended. Board members agreed this is amazing. 11. The new Oversight, Support and Intervention policy for colleges from DfE is welcomed as helpful, and is to be circulated to governors as it is in keeping with the process of risk assessment being followed by the College. 12. The Chair thanked the Principal for his report and the work with SLT in making such progress. This was largely echoed by all with a contrary view were expressed. 13. There was discussion about the closing date for HE applications, which has been set to maximise recruitment from the students which Ruskin targets, which is in line with the sector position. 	Clerk

	<p>14. All colleagues are encouraged to contact the Principal directly regarding Curriculum Development and any connectivity to groups such as the National Youth Agency, and consider encouraging them joining Friends of Ruskin.</p> <p>15. It was suggested that adding social dimension to courses could be a great way of increasing EDI - midwifery for example. It was noted that the college has a thriving new access to nursing programme</p> <p>16. Governors we asked to be cautious and considerate in how any comments and actions outside the College might have unintended consequences, especially on recruitment.</p> <p>17. Governors need to be kept informed on issues such as the dispute so that they can follow 'the party line' and promote the college appropriately. The direct result of the SPA decision to remain independent is the desire to promote unity and professional internally.</p> <p>18. It should be remembered that only fifteen months ago the financial health was inadequate, and the College had no right to remain independent. The £4 million of deficit and the priority has had to be financial, sometimes at the cost of other issues not being addressed as might otherwise have been wished. However, at the end of this year, in July, financial health will be good, which shows just how far this board and this College has come.</p>	All
8.	Policies and Procedures	
	None of the policies were available in time for the Board, so will be presented at the next meeting.	Clerk
9.	Marketing Report	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A PowerPoint presentation by the Business Development Manager was received. 2. Search Engine Optimisation and Social Media traction are showing great reach, and Open Days visitors have increased by 50%. 3. Application trends are still well ahead of the same point in previous years, with much hard work going in to convert and strengthen those applications, each one of which is individually monitored in great detail. 4. A conservative estimate based on like for like acceptances last year is still positive, with an overall figure of 134 against a target of 120 (70 of which are progressions students). 5. Retention figures are less encouraging for HE and this is a key focus for SLT with some degree routes having small class sizes and poor progression. 	
10.	Finance Report	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The interim Finance Director Possibility noted the possibility of a small operating deficit of less than £100k at the year end, but other things are working in our favour. 2. FEC will pick up on low student numbers in any group as it is not a good student experience. They will want 	

	<p>more than 7 or 8 per course. Consequently there needs to be a more prudent approach on budget until final numbers are known.</p> <p>3. Key Ratios are much improved, which is a massive step for the College, though debt levels may need addressing.</p> <p>4. The SFA contract is static though greater FE income can be secured. Our partnership with Abingdon & Witney College will bring considerable funds, as will apprenticeships which is a good source of funding. Pay costs are still healthy and if HE numbers hold up we are on track to end with a small surplus next year, though this is still the main risk. Access course numbers are also on track.</p> <p>5. The Board received the Finance Report.</p> <p>6. Banking Update. The Board received an information paper comparing the current arrangements with those offered by Unity Bank, which were considered to be largely favourable. The Board received the Banking Update and approved the change of bank unanimously.</p>	
11.	Quality Meeting	
	<p>1. The Board received the Quality Report and Quality Improvement Plan Update. As the meeting had gone over time by some margin, there was no time available for discussion</p>	
12.	RSU Report	
	<p>1. No RSU Report was received</p>	
13.	Skills Audit Analysis	
	<p>1. The Skills Audit Analysis was received, but with a note of caution as the tool used did not seem to provide a clear outcome. Enquiries are to be regarding a better Skills Audit tool.</p>	Clerk
14.	Any Other Business	
	<p>There was no other business.</p>	
15.	Date and Time of Next Meeting	
	<p>The next meeting of the Board will be 11.00am 5 July 2019</p>	