



# Ruskin College Oxford

GE/599/M

Minutes of the five hundred and ninety-ninth meeting of the Board of Directors and Trustees held on Friday 8 March 2019 at 11.00am in the Board Room, Ruskin College

Present	In attendance
Doug Nicholls (Chair) (ordinary member) Neil Crew (ordinary member) Kevin Flanagan (ordinary member) Theresa Hoenig (ordinary member) Mike Parker (ordinary member) Pearl Ryan (ordinary member) Peter Pendle (ordinary member) Alison Stoecker (ordinary member) Paul Di Felice (Principal) Peter Dwyer (Staff Governor) Alex Morris (RSU President, Student Representative)	Rena Rani (Assistant Principal) John Kirk (Interim Clerk) Ashok Patel (Interim Finance Director) Mark Griggs (Observer) Meriel Colenut (RSU Vice President, Student Representative) Vinisha Patel (Student Services Manager) Nicki O'Shea (Business Development Manager)
	<b>Apologies</b> Paul Inman (PI) Anne Hock (ordinary member) AH
	<b>Confirmation of Quorum:</b> Quorum met.

1.	<u>Chair's introductory remarks</u>	Action
	<p>Two candidates for Board Membership, Alison Stoecker and Peter Pendle, whose names had been raised at the last meeting and were subsequently recommended by the Search Committee, were approved by the Board and duly appointed and welcomed as new Governors.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Student Vice President Meriel Colenut and Mark Griggs, a potential candidate for the post of College Financial Manager, and introductions were made.</p> <p>It was also agreed that strengthening the Board must be given high priority, though this was on the agenda under item 11.</p> <p>There were discussions on the need for governor recruitment and a skills audit.</p>	
2.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	There were no declarations of interest other than standing declarations of the Chair and Vice Chair.	
3.	<b>Minutes of the Meeting of 30 Nov 2018</b>	

	<p>The minutes were approved subject to correction:  Item 10. Discussion on the Skills Audit had been omitted. It was noted that there had been only three responses.  <b>Members will be now asked once again to complete this.</b></p>	Clerk
<b>4.</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
	<p><b>Item 4. It was agreed that although the College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) had been circulated, it should be formally approved by the Board, and should be tabled at the next Board meeting</b></p> <p>Item 7. It was agreed to notify all staff and governors of a centenary event for Peggy Seeger.</p> <p>Item 9. The Principal reported that of the response to the advertisement for the position of a permanent Clerk to the Board, four had been shortlisted for interview.</p> <p>Item 10. In response to a question about the status of the proposed changes to the Memorandum and Articles, there had been no further response from the Charities Commission despite numerous attempts to contact them by the previous Clerk.  <b>The Board expressed its frustration at the slowness of the workings of the Charities Commission and the Clerk was encouraged to continue to press them for a response.</b></p>	Asst. Principal
<b>5.</b>	<b>Principal's Report on Performance and Business Development Plan update</b>	Clerk
	<p>The principal made a comprehensive presentation and highlighted the ongoing 120 Years' Celebration through numerous popular events.</p> <p>The Board enthusiastically noted the first ever 'Trade Union Official' qualification, a level 4 apprenticeship to commence at the College in January 2020 subject to a tendering process. It was agreed this should be the subject a major marketing campaign.</p> <p>The Curriculum was being expanded with seven apprenticeships delivered with Fircroft College Birmingham, and further collaboration with Abingdon and Whitney College.</p> <p>The Principal had been invited to attend several events including the large 'Kebab' promotion.</p> <p>KPIs were much improved from last year, but there should be caution about overspending on funding allocation.</p> <p>Retention is high, especially on access programme, where progression is now the emphasis.</p> <p>Attendance is good at 94% and FE enrolment is good 120 full time and 47 part time learners</p> <p>There are still risks around finance though this has been mitigated by marketing and business development, sub-letting part of Webb House and the Summer School.</p> <p>There remains a need for a strong curriculum and supporting marketing campaign, and the post of Curriculum Development Manager is being advertised.</p> <p>Areas for improvement are weak student recruitment and poor student experience, which are both receiving attention, with strengthened admissions staff and a review by Student Services.</p> <p>Staff development is being augmented by an engagement strategy to improve retention through personal and professional</p>	

	<p>development. In summary, the curriculum element has been the focus of much work though improvements on HE take longer to deliver than on FE.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that the Board should receive an HR Report to include a staffing update and a statement on equalities for both staff and students.</b></p> <p>There was lengthy discussion about the target market for learners in line with the College strengths, identifying ‘newer courses’ relating the increasing demand for mental health issues and rising knife crime, and the that a possible change of government may lead to significant rise in demand for youth work courses and Higher Level Teaching Assistants.</p> <p><b>Governors are encouraged to pass thoughts and ideas to the Senior Leadership Team via the Principal.</b></p> <p>Estate issues were discussed, and the Board looks forward to receiving the feasibility studying being carried out by Oxford City Council into Ruskin Fields at no cost to the College, which will consider both income and ethos of use.</p> <p>The possibility of local festival was discussed, which could offer a useful income stream and a wider marketing opportunity through huge community involvement.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that the Business Development Plan will feature in the proposed Governor Away Day.</b></p> <p>The Board received the Principal’s Report.</p>	<p>Principal</p> <p>Clerk</p>
7.	<b>Self-Assessment Report -action plan update.</b>	
	<p>The Assistant Principal presented SAR action plan update and highlighted the increase in Trade Union Observations which is positive given the increase in that area of work.</p> <p>Training in April should give respective tutors more confidence in the use of VLE, and lesson planning documentation has been reviewed and circulated to all staff.</p> <p>Staff are also being trained on the implementation of IAG to potential applicants.</p> <p>Student Services have increased enrichment and personal development activity and have a new inclusion advisory group and an EDI calendar.</p> <p>Consideration was to be given to ensure minimum qualifications are a route to progression and not a barrier to learners, and in some case a written assessment will enable enrolment instead of minimum GCSE grades.</p> <p>Staff are regularly networking with employers to ensure there is an informed curriculum.</p> <p><b>A Governor required is required to link to student services and a job description will be circulated.</b></p>	<p>Asst. Principal /Clerk</p>
8.	<b>Finance</b>	
	<p>The Board was reminded that the College is still in recovery, though hopefully for not too much longer. There is much progress and some very good ideas but there must be caution on moving ahead too quickly.</p>	

	<p>Mid-year position is still good. There may be a small deficit but nothing significant.</p> <p>Partnerships are helping with core funding, and commercial activity is much improved at over 90% occupancy.</p> <p>Any over delivery of provision must be minimally above funding as this may be paid for next year.</p> <p>Visiting tutor cost is variable so pay costs can be constrained, non-pay costs are improving again, and hopefully this is sustainable to permit financial recovery without storing up major future costs.</p> <p>KPI targets remains to break even and with a £400k cash holding.</p> <p>With these key indicators achieved there should be good financial health very soon, from where we can progress.</p> <p>There are two banks interested in taking our account, hopefully with proposals coming soon. These will go to Finance Committee, which will make a recommendation to the board for approval. For the benefit of newer governors, Coop Bank are pulling away from the sector and wish to close our account, and a new bank would probably look far more favourable on expansion as an improved relationship is of interest to both parties.</p> <p>The cost of securing assets will hopefully be offset by a lower borrowing rate.</p> <p>Next year's financial plan will take account of any likely changes to HE fees though these would not take effect until the following year due to lagged funding.</p> <p>There was discussion on attracting new HE learners, and the current position is 50% ahead of this time last year. Ruskin always recruits later in the year due to the nature of our students and courses. Our students are not as easy to identify and target as they are not typical 18-year-old schools leavers, but are more disparate in maturity, diversity and geography location, so outreach activity is fundamental.</p> <p>TU feedback on education requires improvement and it has taken 3 years to put in place to a Level 4 qualification. Engagement with Trades Unions continues at the highest level as there is capacity to improve by 100%.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that monthly management accounts be made available to all governors. This will be by email until a document portal is in place</b></p>	Finance Director/ Clerk
9.	<p><b>Policies and Procedures</b></p> <p>The Safeguarding and Prevent Policies for Adults and Children and Young People were approved by the Board.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that in future these documents should be merged, and the Board should receive an annual Safeguarding Report.</b></p>	Clerk
10.	<p><b>Committee Reports</b></p> <p><b>Audit Committee 8 February 2019</b></p> <p>There was discussion about greater governor involvement in Quality and Standards. <b>In view of the FEC Stocktake report it was decided that Audit Committee bring forward a proposal for a properly instituted Quality Committee to report directly to the Board.</b></p> <p>The Report was received by the Board</p> <p><b>Finance Committee 8 February 2019</b></p>	Chair of Audit

	In the light of the Finance Report in Item 8 the Board received the Report.	
<b>11.</b>	<b>Chair's Report</b>	
	<p>There was lengthy discussion on <b>Paper 9B: Election of Chair and Vice Chair.</b></p> <p>The previous board meeting had considered recruiting a high-profile, external candidate as Chair as this might attract students and could benefit from a huge network. However, it is not the usual practice in the sector to look externally for a Chair, and the constitution requires the board to elect a Chair from existing members.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that the term of the incumbent interim chair and vice chair had been reached and that new elections be held.</b></p> <p><b>Paper 9c: Strategy to Strengthen the Board.</b> It was agreed that the Skills Audit needed to be completed to enable the focussed recruitment of governors. The paper was received, and the actions agreed.</p> <p><b>Paper 9d: Collective Responsibility.</b> It was agreed that draft minutes of Board and Committee meetings be circulated within 14 days of meetings, and this be added to the Protocol.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Principal /Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Ruskin Students' Union Report</b>	
	<p><b>The Ruskin Students' Union Report 2018/2019 had been circulated prior to the meeting.</b></p> <p>The appointments of the Student Services Manager and Business Development Manager had been well received by Students.</p> <p>Wellbeing and happiness has improved with positive feedback to the SU Representative</p> <p>Debate on Mission and Values should be kept open.</p> <p>It was suggested that the 400,000 young 'Corbynistas' would be an excellent target market for student recruitment, and that Oxford had a very large turnout to the student Climate Strike, showing high levels of local activism. Courses on the legal aspects of activism could present a major opportunity.</p> <p>The Board commented on a most professional and articulate Student report.</p>	
<b>13.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
	There was no other business.	
<b>14.</b>	<b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b>	
	<b>The next meeting of the Board will be 11.00am 10 May 2019</b>	