

New College Corporation

Tuesday 13 October 2009 Minutes

Present: Dr R Hargreaves
Miss J Almond
Dr S Ali
Mrs S Bass (Part)
Miss G Bleasby (Part)
Mr P Boulter
Mr G Clark
Mr M Crowson
Mr J Dean
Mr J Dwane
Cllr I Fletcher
Mrs J Millington
Mr A Pickerin
Mr S Walton

In Attendance: Mrs B Tyley
Mr P Taylor (Clerk)

1 Appointment of Chairman

Dr Hargreaves was appointed Chairman of the Corporation for the ensuing year.

2 Apologies

Mr Hopkins, Mr Shaw, Miss Athersmith.

3 Appointment of Vice Chairman

Mr Hopkins was appointed Vice Chairman of the Corporation for the ensuing year.

4 Confirmation of Minutes

4.1 The open minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 10 March 2009 were confirmed.

4.2 [In closed Session] The confidential minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 10 March 2009 were confirmed.

4.3 The notes of the informal meeting of the Corporation held on 14 July 2009 were received.

5 Declarations of Interest.

None.

6 Corporation Matters

- 6.1 The current membership of the Corporation was noted.
- 6.2 The Clerk reported the recommendation of the Search Committee that Sarah Bass be appointed to the Corporation, and referred members to the detailed account of the recommendation set out at item 4 of the notes of the informal meeting of the Corporation of 14 July 2009.
The Corporation resolved to appoint Mrs Sarah Bass as General Member of the Corporation.
- 6.3 The Clerk reported the recommendation of the Search Committee that Gail Bleasby be appointed to the Corporation, and referred members to the detailed account of the recommendation set out at item 4 of the notes of the informal meeting of the Corporation of 14 July 2009.
The Corporation resolved to appoint Miss Gail Bleasby as General Member of the Corporation.

[Clerk's note: At this point in proceedings Mrs Bass and Miss Bleasby joined the meeting. The Chairman welcomed them both to the Corporation and introductions were made].

[Clerk's note: At this point in proceedings Mr Pickerin left the meeting].

- 6.4 Cllr Fletcher, Chairman of the Search Committee, reported on the Committee's recommendations in respect of Mr Pickerin. He noted that the Committee had considered the advice of the Nolan Committee on multiple terms of office, and the contribution made by Mr Pickerin to the effective governance of the College. He reported that after due consideration the Committee had resolved to recommend the re-appointment of Mr Pickerin. Corporation members spoke warmly of Mr Pickerin's contribution, particularly in his role as Chairman of the Student Achievement and Standards Committee. The Corporation resolved to re-appoint Mr Pickerin as General Member of the Corporation upon the expiry of his current term of office.

[Clerk's note: At this point in proceedings Mr Pickerin rejoined the meeting].

- 6.5 Cllr Fletcher reviewed briefly the Search Committee's endeavours to secure interest in becoming a Corporation governor as a General Member.

7 Principal's Report

Mr Clark introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Corporation noting that it covered the extremely busy July to October 2009 period, and provided an overview

of student recruitment, achievement and other College activities as well as key external developments affecting the College. Mr Clark summarised major activities in the July period, referring to the successful staff conference at the Whitehouse Hotel. Mr Dean commented that he considered the event a good opportunity for sharing between colleagues, and that the peer to peer presentations had been a success. Mr Clark summarised the potential impact of the formation of the new Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. He referred to the validation of the Foundation Degree modules in Performance Industries, developed by a college/university consortium of which the College is a member. He drew members' attention to the programme of planned maintenance, refurbishment and adaptation carried out during the summer, and noted the renewal of computer stock and the installation of a new Visual Learning Environment and management information system.

Mr Clark noted the publication of the Ofsted Inspection Framework to take effect from September 2009, and described briefly the key elements of the new approach, noting the crucial emphasis on quality and diversity and a methodology akin to an 'audit trail' of students.

Referring to the initial guidance and admissions period in September Mr Clark paid a warm tribute to the College's staff, noting their commitment, flexibility and adaptability.

On funding and planning transitions, he noted the progress towards the shift in responsibility from the LSC to the local authority. Miss Almond provided a helpful account of the work undertaken in the local authority to help ensure a smooth transition of responsibilities, including the assimilation of former LSC staff into the authority. She noted that the national framework on commissioning was awaited, and described the formation of a sub-regional grouping of local authorities that will work to secure the needs of students for out of area placements.

Mr Clark noted that the Apprenticeships Skills Children and Learning Bill, currently in Parliament, is expected to receive its Royal Assent shortly. It is anticipated that it will offer sixth form colleges a choice as to whether to be re-designated as part of a distinct new sixth form college sector. Dr Hargreaves noted the potential significance of the decision on the matter that is expected to come before the Corporation at its December meeting.

Mr Clark and Mrs Tyley reviewed the information on performance set out in the report and commented on: the variability of AS performance; the improvements in some A2 subjects; the exceeding of teaching grade targets; the specific identification of underperformance; and the successful student recruitment for 2009/10. In respect of the latter, Mrs Tyley noted that recruitment was above target, but that the increased student numbers would not result in increased in-year funding. However,

LSC assurances had been received about consolidating the grants in next year's funding.

In concluding his report, Mr Clark outlined the six key priorities for the College for the forthcoming period.

The Chairman thanked Mr Clark for his report, and the Corporation resolved to receive the report.

8 Student Achievement and Standards Committee Matters

Mr Pickerin, Chairman of the Student Achievement and Standards Committee, introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Corporation. He summarised briefly the revised Ofsted Common Inspection Framework set out in the report, noting that a full inspection can be expected before December 2010, and referred to the new approach of tracking the experiences and outcomes for specific learner cohorts. On curriculum development he noted the consideration by the Committee of whole college curriculum planning, referring to the importance of the three key structural elements of: courses; personal tutorial system; and enrichment.

In response to a question from Mr Dean, Mr Clark noted that the need to strengthen the capacity for curriculum innovation and development did not imply a criticism of curriculum work at course level, but referred rather to the capacity to develop an effective cross-college curriculum capable of meeting the complex and varied needs of learners.

Mr Pickerin referred members to the summary of exam results 2009 set out in the report, the ALIS value added measures, and the summary of College success rates. Finally Mr Pickerin reported that the Committee had been heartened by the improvements made in seven areas of concern in 2008/09, and had welcomed the work undertaken to strengthen intervention and support procedures. The Corporation resolved to receive the report.

9 Accommodation Matters

Mrs Tyley introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Corporation, noting that it provided an overview of the work undertaken by View Architects to explore the feasibility of building a new Learning Centre on the King Street site. Mrs Tyley summarised the information presented in the report, noting the consultations undertaken by the architects as well as the context of the proposal as being within a well developed plan for phased development (a 'master plan') for the other elements of the King Street site. She referred to the indicative costs of the proposal included in the report, and noted the indicative borrowing costs provided by Barclays Commercial Bank.

Mr Clark commented that the Finance and General Purposes Committee had broadly welcomed the 'direction of travel' of the proposals, noting the coherence of the overall plan for developing the College. However, Mr Clark reported his growing concerns, particularly in the light of the strong autumn recruitment, whether the College's current building stock could accommodate current students as well as cope with the inevitable disruption arising from the construction of the Learning Centre development. He felt that other priorities were emerging in terms of general classrooms, 'bookable' IT rooms, and student dining and social areas. In this light he felt it was important to consider some re-phasing of the 'master plan' before bringing a substantive proposal to the Corporation.

In extended debate on the matter Dr Hargreaves referred to the importance of taking a firm decision, based on detailed plans and financial projections at the Corporation's December meeting. Mr Crowson and others referred with considerable regret to the time wasted by the College and Corporation on a co-location proposal originated by the LSC. Mr Walton felt that a purposive recommended proposal for the Corporation should come to the December meeting, and that members would find it difficult otherwise to determine priorities between say, a learning centre or classrooms. Mr Boulter referred to the significant role to be played by the College in 'Campus Telford' and contrasted the limited scope of the development contemplated at the College (limited by the need to secure a commercial loan and the use of once-off reserves) with the much larger capital expenditures being made in a large number of schools in Telford. Mr Clark and Miss Almond commented that it remained unclear as to the availability of capital funding for the sector in the future. Dr Hargreaves noted that without significant funding from elsewhere the College would of necessity need to borrow funds to undertake even a modest development, and financial projections would need to include the possibility of future possible reductions in student numbers.

After further comments from members the Corporation resolved to receive the report, and note that a full presentation will be made by View Architects at the Corporation's December meeting.

10 Finance and General Purposes Committee Matters

In the absence of Mr Hopkins, the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Dr Hargreaves introduced the report (copy in minute book) noting that the key elements of the report were the Budget 2009/10 and Three Year Financial Plan to 2011/12 coming to the Corporation for formal approval. Mrs Tyley summarised the main points of the budget and three year financial plan, referring members to the six elements providing the basis for the compilation of the budget set out in detail in the report. She noted that a small surplus (after FRS 17 adjustment) was forecast in each of the three years covered by the budget and forecast. She reported that after review the Finance and General Purposes Committee had agreed

to propose that the College's financial health assessment should remain as 'Category A'.

The Corporation resolved to receive the report, and to:

- 1 approve the budget 2009/2010; and
- 2 approve the Three Year Financial Plan to 2011/2012; and
- 3 confirm the College's financial health as Category 'A'.

11 Audit Committee Matters

The Clerk introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Corporation explaining that it updated the Corporation on the work of the Audit Committee and brought forward the appointment of auditors for formal decision.

The Corporation resolved to receive the report and to:

- 1 approve the re-appointment of KPMG LLP (UK) as College internal auditors for the forthcoming year; and
- 2 approve the re-appointment of Grant Thornton LLP) as College financial statements auditors for the forthcoming year.

12 Corporation Matters

12.1 Appointment to Corporation Committees

The Clerk drew attention to the list of Committee members (copy in minute book) set out in the agenda, and the Corporation resolved to:

- 1 appoint existing members to committees en bloc; and
- 2 appoint Mr Pickerin to the Remuneration Committee; and
- 3 appoint Mrs Millington to the Discipline and Suspension Committee; and
- 4 appoint Miss Bleasby to the Discipline and Suspension Committee.

12.2 Annual Review of Committee Terms of Reference

The Clerk introduced the report (copy in minute book) noting that the Annual Review of Committee Terms of Reference suggested two amendments to the terms of reference of the Discipline and Suspension Committee as set out in the report, and to retain the existing terms for other committees.

The Corporation resolved to approve the amendments to the terms of reference of Discipline and Suspension Committee as set out in report.

12.3 Governors' Register of Interest Annual Completion

The Clerk invited Corporation Members to complete a Register of Interests entry form, copies of which, together with guidance, were distributed with the agenda.

12.4 Governors' Skills Audit Entries

The Clerk invited Corporation members to consider and report to him any amendments needed in their skills audit entries.

12.5 Annual Governor Attendance Report

The Clerk referred to the report (copy in minute book) showing the attendance of members at meetings of the Corporation and its committees, requesting that members inform him of any errors or omissions in the record. The Clerk reminded members that a cross against a member's name for a meeting did not necessarily imply any shortcomings in that member's actions since there were occasions when diaried meetings had to be rescheduled.

The Corporation resolved to receive the report

12.6 Governor Training: Proposals for September-August 2010

The Clerk invited members to consider and propose to the Principal, Chairman and Clerk, topics for Governor Training for the forthcoming year.

12.7 Annual Decisions on Corporation Confidential Items

The Clerk introduced the report (copy in minute book) noting that the Corporation was required to consider all confidential items for disclosure, but that his review had not resulted in any items being proposed for disclosure.

The Corporation resolved not to disclose any additional confidential items.

12.8 Annual Review of Corporation Performance

The Clerk referred to the report (copy in minute book) which presented the second annual assessment of Corporation performance against the approved list of performance indicators. The Clerk was pleased to report that the performance shown was overwhelmingly positive.

The Corporation resolved to approve the report.

[Clerk's note: at this point the Chairman determined that item 13 should be considered before item 12.9].

[Clerk's note: at this point the Clerk left the meeting].

13 Dates of next meetings

The dates for Corporation meetings set out in the agenda were noted.

12.9 Annual Appraisal of Clerk

[Clerk's note: in accordance with clauses 15.4 and 17.2c of the Instruments of Government, a separate note of proceedings was made to be excluded from the open minute book].