

New College Corporation
Thursday 15 December 2009
Minutes

Present: Dr R Hargreaves (Chairman)
Miss J Almond
Mrs S Bass
Miss G Bleasby
Mr G Clark
Mr M Crowson
Mr J Dean
Mr J Dwane
Cllr I Fletcher
Miss G Hickman
Mr D Hopkins
Mrs J Millington
Mr A Pickerin
Mr J Shaw
Mr S Walton

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

1 Apologies

Dr Ali, Mr Boulter, Miss Athersmtih

2 Confirmation of Minutes

- 2.1 The open minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 13 October 2009 were confirmed.
- 2.2 [in closed session] The confidential minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 13 October 2009 were confirmed.

3 Declarations of Interest

None. Individual interests were declared under specific agenda items and are recorded separately.

4 Corporation Matters

- 4.1 The Corporation noted the current membership.
- 4.2 The Corporation welcomed and appointed Miss Grace Hickman as student member of the Corporation. Members of the Corporation introduced themselves briefly to Miss Hickman.

4.3 Cllr Fletcher, Chairman of the Search Committee, reported on the proceedings of the Search Committee meeting held immediately prior to the Corporation meeting.

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

Cllr Fletcher reported that the Committee had considered the matter carefully including the advice of the Nolan Committee on multiple terms of office and the contribution made by Mr Crowson to the effective governance of the College. He reported that the Committee had resolved to recommend the re-appointment of Mr Crowson. The Corporation resolved to re-appoint Mr Crowson as General Member of the Corporation upon the expiry of his current term of office.

[Clerk's note: at this point Mr Crowson rejoined the meeting].

Cllr Fletcher reported briefly on other matters considered by the Committee, and noted that the Committee was to meet again in March 2010 to consider the remaining vacancy for a General Member.

[Clerk's note: at this point in proceedings the Chairman announced the intention of considering item 6 on the agenda before item 5].

6 Accommodation Update

Mr Doyle, from View Architects, conducted a presentation for the Corporation reviewing the general or 'master' plan for the King Street campus, and then outlined the more detailed plans for the first phase of development as now envisaged.

He described the 'master' plan as first presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee illustrating the four phases envisaged. He noted that the initial first phase as then conceived involved the development of a Learning Centre in 'B' Block. The overall plan involved taking the estate from some 8,500m² to 10,500m².

He described how in conjunction with College management the architects had revisited the phasing of various stages, and noted that the original phase one, constructing the Learning Centre, had of necessity involved a temporary loss of teaching space. He acknowledged that with an increase in student numbers, and increased pressure on teaching spaces, developing the Centre as phase one had become more problematic.

Mr Doyle referred members to the tabled document (copy in minute book) that summarised the major points of his presentation. He described in considerable detail the emerging revised plan for Phase One of the development within which there were two options (referred to as 'Option 5' and 'Option 6'). The proposal involved remodelling of accommodation to the rear of the Hall and gymnasium in the construction of a two storey block containing: a fitness suite; kitchen; WCs and changing rooms; storage; and lifts and circulation on the ground floor, with classrooms, lifts and circulation on the first floor. Refurbishment would involve the

development of a new refectory area in the current gymnasium and a new multi-function (including sports and dance) space in the current hall with a new entrance and reception area.

Options '5' and '6' were essentially similar save that option '6' involved a larger fitness suite, a sports office and an additional first floor classroom. Options '5' and '6' involved the same areas of refurbishment (756m²), but the latter involved a larger new build area (433m², as opposed to 366m²). Option six would naturally involve a higher total cost. Mr Doyle commented that he was encouraged to present the revised phase and with its two storey element as a realistic proposition following an encouraging meeting with local authority planning officers who did not have an in-principle objection to a two storey development to the rear of 'B' Block.

Mr Doyle commented that he could see many advantages in the new proposal, particularly since it centred on replacing the poorest current accommodation, increased the flexibility of existing spaces, improved social amenities for students and produced an enhanced and improved entrance and reception for the College.

In the debate that ensued, members first posed questions to Mr Doyle and Mr Clark. The key points from questions from Mrs G Bass, Miss Bleasby, Mr Walton, Mr Hopkins and Miss Almond, together with a summary of the relevant responses from Mr Doyle, Mr Clark and Mrs Tyley are summarised below:

Question: Is the size of the new classrooms appropriate for the needs of New College?

Response: Yes, the classrooms of 50m² should accommodate 25 students, an appropriate size for New College groups.

Question: What is the price base for the costings set out in cost analysis shown in the proposals document?

Response: The quantity surveyor has used a negative inflator in the cost analysis on the basis that construction costs are still falling.

Question: What is the nature of the partitions proposed? Are they robust enough for the intended use?

Response: Experience elsewhere has suggested that retractable partitions have a good sound reduction capacity and are robust with a lengthy useful life, provided proper maintenance is undertaken.

Question: What would be the build time, and is a 2010 start feasible?

Response: The build time is around nine months. It is feasible that the construction work could be started in 2010 with a completion by Easter 2011. Thereafter the necessary refurbishment could be undertaken with a completion by September 2011.

After further questions of clarification in extended debate, members considered various aspects of the proposal. Mr Dwane commented that the proposal did not offer a significant benefit from a sports perspective, and fell far short of the provision of a sports hall. Mrs Tyley commented that they had been looking at accommodation usage across the College, and estimated that the proposals could accommodate current demands. However, she acknowledged that consultation with staff on the proposals was due. Mr Doyle commented that the construction of a four court sports hall would take the entire budget for the developments proposed.

Mr Walton, Mr Dean and others commented that the proposals for Phase one need to be viewed in the context of the 'master' plan for the site, and very careful consideration given to ensuring that it addresses the College's priority needs.

Mr Doyle commented that the College's accommodation was characterised by having too many bespoke facilities, lacking the flexibility to be adapted to changing needs. The proposals focused on the poorest facilities in the current estate and the provision of flexible accommodation.

Mr Clark commented that the most pressing need for the College is to make improvements to spaces for students. The current dining facility was designed for 150 students, and the College now has 1400 students. He also stressed the need for a single point of access to the College for security purposes. In his view the proposals addressed College priorities and promised to deliver the biggest gain for the expenditure proposed.

In setting out the way forward on the matter Mr Clark and Mrs Tyley reported that further work on affordability and further consultations would be undertaken and that a special meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee to consider proposals and make recommendations had been set for 18 January 2010.

The Chairman informed the Corporation that a special meeting of the Corporation to discuss the single issue of accommodation development could well be needed in advance of the Corporation's scheduled March meeting.

The Chairman thanked Mr Doyle for his presentation.

5 Principal's Report

Mr Clark introduced his report (copy in minute book) for the Corporation, explaining that it dealt primarily with two matters: an account of the recent audits and inspections of the College; and the question of sixth form College designation.

On **inspections and audits** Mr Clark described the extensive series of audits and inspections undertaken at the College in the period October to December 2009 set in the context of the other priorities in the College autumn term. He summarised the main focus and initial outcomes of: the Learndirect Quality Review; the Financial

Statements and Regularity Audit; the LSC Funding Audit; the International Baccalaureate Authorisation visit; the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review by QAA; the Ofsted Data Audit; the LSC Financial Assurance Review; and the Ofsted College Inspection.

Mr Clark referred to the success of the International Baccalaureate (IB) authorisation visit, noting that the College was now authorised to offer the IB. Mrs Tyley reported that due consideration was being given to offering the IB for a 2010 start. Mr Clark referred to the QAA review of the HND/C in Music Production, noting the positive outcome and paying tribute to the work of Mrs Vingoe undertaken in relation to the review.

On the matter of the Ofsted College inspection, Mr Clark reported on the preliminary results, noting that an overall judgement of 'satisfactory' was anticipated and commenting on those areas where a need for improvement was identified by inspectors. In particular he referred to the identified need for governor training in safeguarding and equality and diversity. In debate Cllr Fletcher and Miss Almond made helpful suggestions for useful sources of appropriate training.

Mr Clark reported on the additional strain felt by the College as a result of this 'wave' of audits and inspections, and spoke highly of the reaction of staff and students to them. The Corporation echoed Mr Clark's comments and agreed that the Corporation's appreciation be passed to both staff and students of the College. Additionally the Chairman thanked Dr Ali, Mr Hopkins and Mr Pickerin for the part they played in the Ofsted College inspection on behalf of governors.

Turning to the **designation of sixth form colleges** Mr Clark reviewed the provisions of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill which identified sixth form colleges as a distinct legal category in Further Education for the first time, and allows the Secretary of State to designate some existing FE Corporations (such as New College Corporation) as sixth form college corporations. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has invited New College Corporation to be so designated, to take effect from April 2010. Mr Clark summarised the main points of the process and the main issues raised set out in the documents attached at appendix one to the Principal's report (copy in minute book): a position paper on designation from the sixth form colleges forum; a discussion paper from the Association of Colleges; and the invitation letter for self-identification as a sixth form college from the DCSF.

[Clerk's note: at this point in proceedings Cllr Fletcher and Miss Almond declared non pecuniary interests in the matter as member and corporate director respectively of the responsible local authority (Telford & Wrekin Council) and took no part in the consideration or determination of the matter].

Mr Clark summarised the legal background and the main issues involved in designation, including the position in respect of capital; performance management; powers of intervention; protocols; and non designation status.

In debate Mr Dean, Mr Pickerin and others asked about the new relationship with the local authority and the impact of local authority commissioning, particularly in the light of the funding gap between school and college funding. By way of information only Miss Almond referred to the positive protocol agreed between the Sixth Form Colleges Forum and the Local Government Association. On funding it was noted that local authorities will be commissioning all 14-19 provision regardless of designation (that is both designated sixth form colleges and general further education colleges) and that funding rates will be set, at least in the immediate future, by the Young People's Learning Agency for England. Several members expressed the view that they could see no advantage in New College becoming a general further education college.

Mr Clark advised the Corporation that as a sixth form college designation was a natural choice for New College and he supported designation.

Having weighed carefully the information and views presented, and it being put to a vote with no contrary indications, the Corporation resolved to accept the invitation to designate the College as a sixth form college.

7 Audit Committee Matters

Mr Walton, Chairman of the Audit Committee, introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Corporation. He summarised briefly the matters discussed by the Committee at its meeting of 25 November 2009, and referred members to the detail set out in the report and its four appendices.

The Corporation resolved to:

- i. Receive the Key Issues Memorandum for the year ended 31 July 2009 from the Financial Statements and Regularity Auditor;
- ii. Receive the internal audit annual report for the year ended 31 July 2009;
- iii. Receive the Audit Committee's Annual Report; and
- iv. Approve the internal audit plan 2009/2010.

8 Finance and General Purposes Committee Matters

Mr Hopkins, Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Corporation, noting that it included a number of significant policy documents for consideration by the Corporation as well as the College's Report and Financial Statements for the period ended 31 July 2009 and updated management reports.

He drew the Corporation's particular attention to the three significant policy documents appended to the report, namely: the Policy Statement Student Support; the Safeguarding Policy; and the Single Equalities Scheme. He asked members to note particularly the formal responsibilities of the Corporation in respect of the Single Equalities Scheme. He stressed the importance of ensuring that the Corporation has appropriate policies in place.

In debate, Mr Pickerin and others expressed support for the policies and acknowledged their importance. Following questions from Mr Dean and Miss Almond, Mr Clark confirmed that full consultation with staff had yet to be completed and that therefore the policies should be considered as drafts subject to further consultation. After the completion of consultation they would be brought back to the Corporation for final ratification.

The Corporation resolved to approve as drafts subject to consultation:

- i. The Policy Statement Student Support;
- ii. The Safeguarding Policy; and
- iii. The Single Equalities Scheme.

Moving on to financial matters Mr Hopkins summarised the other matters considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and drew attention to the Report and Financial Statements and the associated Letter of Representation, the detail of which is set out in the report. He also referred members to the information provided in the Management Reports. Finally he drew members' attention to the proposed minor amendment to the College Financial Regulations.

The Corporation resolved to:

- i. Receive and approve the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2009;
- ii. Approve the Letter of Representation;
- iii. Receive the Management Reports for the period ended 31 October 2009; and
- iv. Approve the revised Financial Regulations.

9 Dates of next meetings

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