

New College Telford
Corporation
Tuesday 7 October 2008

Minutes

Present: Dr R Hargreaves (Chairman)
Mr P Boulter
Mr G Clark
Mr M Crowson
Mr V Davies
Mr J Dean
Mr J Dwane
Cllr I Fletcher
Mr D Hopkins
Mrs J Millington
Mr A Pickerin
Mr J Shaw
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 Woulds.

3 Appointment of Vice Chairman

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

4 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Corporation meeting of 17 June 2008 were confirmed. Mr Dwane noted that the minutes were correct in recording that in relation to college estates accommodation the Corporation had resolved that the accommodation strategy should be a regular separate agenda item for the Corporation, but was concerned that in the present agenda this resolution had not been enacted. The Clerk responded that since 'College Estates Strategy and Options' had been included as one of the five discrete items identified in the report on the agenda on Finance and General Purposes Committee matters, and included the available information on the matter, it afforded the opportunity for all members to consider the topic. He therefore felt it satisfied the sense of the resolution made by the Corporation. However, after a short debate members re-affirmed the intention of the original resolution, and the Clerk undertook to ensure its full implementation.

5 Declarations of Interest

The Clerk noted that item 8 on the agenda dealt with the consultation on post 16 education in Telford and Wrekin, and as such covered a topic in which almost all persons in the local community could have an interest, either as a parent or other relative of a child potentially affected by the changes proposed, or through a connection with one of the institutions named, including New College. He therefore advised that members should declare an interest where their interest exceeded that of the generality of the local population. In this light the following declarations were made: Mr Pickerin as a governor of the Phoenix School; Mr Clark as a governor of Wrockwardine Wood School and Chair of Governors at Phoenix School; Mrs Millington as Community Learning Co-ordinator for Telford and Wrekin Council; Cllr Fletcher as governor of the Haberdashers' Adams' Federation and Abraham Darby Academy.

6 Corporation Membership

Having chaired the meeting of the Search Committee which took place immediately before the Corporation meeting, Cllr Fletcher reported on its recommendations and deliberations.

Cllr Fletcher reported that the Committee first considered the re-appointment of Mr Shaw.

[Clerk's note: at this point in proceedings Mr Shaw left the meeting]

He noted that the Committee had considered Mr Shaw's attendance at Corporation meetings and participation in corporate governance through his membership and chairmanship of committees, together with other relevant matters and had resolved to recommend his re-appointment to the Corporation. The Corporation resolved to recommend the re-appointment of Mr Shaw to the Corporation.

[Clerk's note: at this point in proceedings Mr Shaw re-joined the meeting and Mr Hopkins left the meeting]

Cllr Fletcher reported that the committee had considered the re-appointment of Mr Hopkins. He noted that the Committee had considered Mr Hopkins' attendance at Corporation meetings and participation in corporate governance through his vice chairmanship of the Corporation and membership and chairmanship of committees, together with other relevant matters and had resolved to recommend his re-appointment to the Corporation.

The Corporation resolved to re-appoint Mr Hopkins to the Corporation.

[Clerk's note: at this point in proceedings Mr Hopkins re-joined the meeting]

Cllr Fletcher reported that the Committee had considered other vacancies on the Corporation, namely one vacancy for a general member and two vacancies for student members. The Clerk reported that Ms Rosser, Assistant Principal, had been working with students on representation matters, and that it was anticipated that nominations for the student member vacancies would be forthcoming and allow appointments to be made at the Corporation's December meeting. On the vacancy for a general member, Cllr Fletcher reported that the Committee had agreed an approach be made to Telford and Wrekin Council that may result in an individual being considered for the vacancy at the next meeting of the Search Committee and subsequently at the Corporation's December meeting.

7 Principal's Report

Mr Clark introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Corporation, explaining that it provided a brief overview of trends and highlights of the work of the college since his last report in June 2008, and a summary of the outcomes and performance of the college for the year 2007/2008. He explained that much of his report linked directly with the following agenda item, and the issue of post 16 planning in Telford.

Mr Clark characterised the 2007/08 year as a successful one for the college, where there had been an improvement in a number of critical areas including: success rates; overall student achievement; standards of teaching; value added measures; student feedback; and college financial health. He summarised some of the major changes facing the college, referring particularly to the transitional period leading to the closure of the LSC in 2010, with the funding responsibility shifting to local authorities. He referred also to the changes in 14-19 curriculum and noted the college's engagement in a number of key areas including: 'extended projects'; new specialised diplomas; the International Baccalaureate; and new 'A' level specification. He commented that much of this curriculum development had not yet been fully specified nor realised.

Turning to the matter of the raising of the 'participation age', he described the government's aspirations to ensure that all young people participate in education or training to the age of 18 by 2015.

He commented that in considering this change all those engaged in planning for the implementation would do well to recognise that a significant part of the increase in participation would be in forms of work based training, and not necessarily in full time

education. A significant proportion of the increase would be aimed at those currently not engaging in any form of education and training and will involve disproportionate numbers of young people who are low attaining and/or experiencing social disadvantage.

In debate on this matter, Dr Hargreaves expressed the view that a system based on compulsion post 16 was unlikely to prove successful while there was a significant minority of post 16 young people who had no inclination to continue their education or training.

Mr Hopkins felt that there was merit in the attempt to deal with a disadvantaged group of young people, but noted that it would be very expensive and success would not be guaranteed. He commented the proposals for post 16 expansion in South Telford had a logical basis in attempting to make local provision for previously unengaged learners. Mr Boulter commented that his experience was that disaffection in young people did not necessarily start at the post 16 phase and that it might be more effective to target these new resources at the 11-16 phase.

Mr Walton expressed the view that remaining at school seemed an unlikely choice for the target group of young people, and wondered precisely what was in the post 16 proposals in Telford that would prove attractive to the target group young people. Mr Pickerin commented that the 11-16 education sector in South Telford was turbulent with significant over capacity in secondary schools, and that the post 16 expansion seemed to be based on uncertain forecasting. The Chairman commented that the Corporation would return to this matter when considering the next agenda item.

Mr Clark drew members' attention to the College's implementation of a 'Learner Engagement Strategy'. He referred to an element in the strategy being the development of a College Council to increase the involvement and representation of students in aspects of College life. Means would be investigated of ensuring that any such developments were fully integrated with the College's Instruments and Articles of Government.

Mr Clark summarised the major changes in the machinery of government, and referred to the anticipated re-designation of the sixth form college 'sub-sector'. He drew members' attention to a survey of the quality of post 16 providers undertaken by Ofsted and noted the positive outcome for sixth form colleges, and in particular the additional choice offered by FE colleges and sixth form colleges when compared to school sixth forms.

Mr Clark concluded his remarks by paying warm tribute to the commitment shown by staff colleagues over the last year, and in particular commended them for their work under the additional pressure of high student recruitment. He also referred to the retirement of David Smith after a long association with the College and recorded his significant contribution to the College's development. Dr Hargreaves and Mr Hopkins paid tributes to the work done by David Smith over the years and expressed their gratitude for his loyalty and assistance to Corporation members. Dr Hargreaves reported that he had written a letter of thanks to David on behalf of the College and Corporation.

The Corporation resolved to receive the report.

8 College Planning

Mr Clark introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Corporation, explaining that it provided an overview of College planning in the context of local regional and national developments. He summarised the policy context within which the College operates, and the main features of the transition period to 2010 including those arising from new 14-19 and post 19 funding and planning arrangements. He referred to the descriptions by commentators of the characteristics of the recently classified 14-19 phase as: intensity; contradiction; conflict; and confusion. He noted that coherence and rationality appear elusive in the plethora of local and national changes that impact upon the College. Turning to the local post 16 proposed changes drawn up in the context of an anticipated increase in student numbers by 2015 when the 'participation age' is planned to rise to 18, he referred firstly to the local plans for the national 'Building Schools for the Future' (BSF) programme. He noted the significance of the securing by the local authority of BSF funding and the pressure to develop academies.

Mr Pickerin referred also to the pressure on the local authority to respond to the fact that several local secondary schools were included in the 'national challenge' group. In response to questions from Mr Dwane and others Mr Clark described the impact locally of BSF, but noted that the Hadley Learning Community development had been funded in the main from the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Mr Boulter also noted the importance of BSF developments at William Brookes School in the neighbouring authority. Mr Clark briefly reviewed the history of the formation of Madeley and Abraham Darby academies, and the significance of the relationship between the local authority and Thomas Telford School. Mr Walton enquired as to whether the College records the reasons why students from schools with existing sixth forms come to New College, and suspected in large it derives from a desire to move on from a school environment to a mature college environment. Mrs Tyley responded that detailed reasons were not recorded, but that staff feedback would indicate that as the desire to 'move on' from school, and the wider range of course provided by the College constituted significant choice factors.

Mr Clark described the collaborative work undertaken in 2007 on the concept of 'Campus Telford' which anticipated that colleges and schools would work together to ensure that there would be a coherent 14-19 offer across the borough by 2014, and noted some of the factors that appear to have changed in the proposals. He described the proposals themselves (set out in full in the report and with additional details in the appendices) and commented that an unintended consequence might be that institutions could become more motivated to act out of self-interest.

In the wide ranging extended debate that ensued, several members expressed the view that the proposals could benefit New College and students who would have access to the expertise available at the College.

Mr Boulter regretted that the Abraham Darby proposal will result in more students in the selective sector via Adams' Grammar School. He also commented on the difficulties that will be faced by smaller post 16 providers in coping with the increasingly complex post 16

curriculum offering, in particular the new diplomas. Mr Dean felt that the consultation in respect Abraham Darby and Madeley academies was of limited relevance since as independent institutions both had the power to make additional provision. Cllr Fletcher reported that the Abraham Darby proposals were developed in partnership with the local authority, which had welcomed them. He noted that academies are encouraged to develop sixth forms. Mr Pickerin felt that the local authority's planning in South Telford had been less than successful and believed that the addition of 50 post 16 students per cohort at Lord Silkin and Phoenix schools in a South Telford Skills Centre constituted a reaction to the emerging proposals from the two academies. Mrs Millington had attended a consultation meeting and summarised her impressions (further details circulated to members for information) of the event and participants. Some felt the access to impartial advice cited by Mrs Marsden of LSC was going to be important to ensure young people were not persuaded against their interests to remain at a particular institution, and that much of Mr Maher's contribution on behalf of Madeley Academy was inappropriate. Overall she believed the proposals could act to strengthen the position of New College. Mr Davies reported that he had also attended a consultation event (written details circulated), and had shared many of the impressions recorded by Mrs Millington. He felt Mr Collins offered an informative overview of the proposals and had expressed a commitment to avoiding the unnecessary duplication of provision. Mr Clark reported that Dr Ali had also attended a consultation event (written summary circulated) and had been left with the impression that the proposals could have a positive outcome for New College, and doubted that the institutions named in the proposals will have sufficient capacity to make appropriate provision on their own. He felt that these proposals could strengthen the case for financial support for New College's accommodation developments and suggested that a Town Centre location might be appropriate.

By way of response to these comments, Mr Clark expressed the view that it would be of central importance for the College to maintain its breadth of provision and develop additional elements (such as the International Baccalaureate to strengthen its course offerings. He felt that the College had good relationships with institutions in the area, and that the College's initial reaction should be generally a positive one. After further comments from members the Corporation resolved that its response to the proposals should be as follows:

The College should:

- 1 Use the opportunity to open discussions with the local authority, the LSC and Advantage West Midlands about: a) the potential for New College to make a positive contribution in a potentially difficult period; and b) capital funding opportunities.
- 2 Evaluate the current strategic positioning in the College's market and marketing strategy and identify target markets – especially focusing on learner need - drawing upon the College's knowledge of current student experience, and parental and other perceptions. The College should review curriculum provision as part of this consideration of strategic repositioning.
- 3 Seek to develop stronger partnerships with secondary schools and other providers. In particular this would involve reconsidering 'school liaison' and

current marketing activities to take a more pro-active, but carefully targeted approach to relational and marketing activities.

9 Student Achievement and Standards Committee Matters

As Chairman of the Committee, Mr Pickerin introduced the report (copy in the minute book) for the Corporation explaining that it provided an overview of matters discussed at the Committee meeting of 29 September 2008. He drew attention to the upward trends in success rates, retention rates and achievement rates in 2007/08, noting in particular that the overall College success rate is now within 1% of the national Sixth Form College benchmark, and that the achievement rate had outperformed the benchmark. He referred members to the general improvements across the College set out in detail in the report in the area of pass rates, higher grade achievement and value added assessments. Turning to the Areas of Concern considered by the Committee, Mr Pickerin referred to the improvements evident in 9 of the 12 areas of concern identified in 2007, and the efforts of successful management action in computing and ICT, and in Biology and Human Biology. He drew members' attention to other aspects of the report including the monitoring report for the Quality Improvement Plan 2007/2008.

In concluding remarks Mr Pickerin, with support from Mr Hopkins, recorded the Committee's satisfaction with progress made and improvements achieved across the College and expressed the Committee's gratitude to New College staff for their efforts in what the Committee had agreed was a remarkable achievement. Corporation members wished the Corporation's congratulations to all staff to be formally recorded and passed on to staff. Mr Clark undertook to ensure that the Corporation's congratulations were passed on to staff via the weekly bulletin.

The Corporation resolved to receive the report.

10 Finance and General Purposes Committee Matters

Mr Hopkins, Chairman of the Committee, introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Corporation, explaining that it outlined the latest position as reported to the Committee at its meeting of 18 September 2008 and covered finances, student numbers and accommodation. He referred the Corporation to the draft outturn figures set out in detail in the report and at appendix 1, and recorded the Committee's satisfaction at the prospective positive outturn figure in what has been a financially challenging year, and referred to the impact of the staff reduction exercise undertaken last year. He drew members' attention to the balance sheet, noting the impact of pensions and potential scheme shortfalls on the balance sheet and how the College's financial position is presented. In a short debate that followed Mrs Tyley answered questions on matters of detail within the report from Mrs Millington and Mr Crowson.

Mr Clark provided the Corporation with a summary of developments on College estates strategy and accommodation matters. He referred to the appointment of new property

consultants as client advisors to assist the College in updating the main elements of its property strategy and in presenting a robust property case to the LSC. In response to questions from Mr Pickerin and others, Mr Clark confirmed that the improvements in performance and the additional student recruitment acted to strengthen the case for LSC capital funding support. He noted that the work involved preparing a revised planned maintenance programme, where liabilities are expected to be over £700k and a current space utilisation survey. He reported that the aim was to complete the next stage in the options review by November/December 2008. Mr Clark reported that Dr Hargreaves had written to the Leader of Telford and Wrekin Council on the matter of the College's accommodation, and that Cllr S Burrell, the Council's lead member for Children and Young People will visit the College shortly to discuss future plans. Mrs Tyley described the short term accommodation options currently being considered.

The Corporation resolved to receive the report.

12 Corporation Matters

12.1 Appointments to Corporation Committees

The Clerk referred members to report 15.08 (copy in minute book) showing current committee membership. There being no proposals for changes in membership, the Corporation resolved to appoint existing committee members en bloc for the ensuing year. The Clerk informed members that Mr Davies, Chairman of the Audit Committee for many years, had informed him that he had decided not to seek re-appointment when his current term of office as a Corporation member ceases in April 2009.

12.2 Annual review of Committee Terms of Reference

The Clerk referred members to his report 16.08 (copy in minute book) which proposed a small change in Terms of Reference following a review. The Corporation resolved to approve the revised Terms of Reference.

12.3 Governors' Register of Interest Annual Completion

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

12.4 Governors' Skills Audit Entries

The Clerk requested that all members consider and report to him any amendments or updates needed in their skills audit entries, explaining that the information is used by the Search Committee when considering recommendations for new members.

12.5 Annual Governor Attendance Report

The Clerk referred to report 18.08 (copy in minute book) showing the attendance of members at meetings of the Corporation and its committees.

The Clerk reminded members that the appearance of a cross against a members' name for a meeting did not necessarily imply any shortcomings in that members' actions, since there

were circumstances where, due to the exigencies of College or Corporation life, diaried meetings had been rescheduled.

The Corporation resolved to receive the report.

12.6 Annual Review of Corporation Performance

[Clerk's note: this item was incorrectly shown in the agenda as 'Annual Decision on Corporation Confidential Items' – see agenda item 12.7 below]

The Clerk referred members to report 19.08 (copy in minute book) which presented the first annual assessment of Corporation performance against the approved list of performance indicators. The Clerk was pleased to report that the performance shown was overwhelming positive.

The Corporation resolved to approve the report.

12.7 Annual Review of Corporation Confidential Items

The Clerk referred to report 20.08 (copy in minute book) and noted 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 Governor Training – Proposals for 2008/09

The Clerk reported that he had consulted the Principal and Vice Principal on the matter and they had proposed 'Safeguarding Children and Young People' and the 'Post 16 Curriculum' as appropriate topics for training. The Clerk invited members to consider any training needs they might identify and raise them with him, and informed members that he would be undertaking induction sessions for new members as appropriate.

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

13 Dates of Next Meetings

The dates set out in the agenda were noted by the Corporation. However, the Clerk reported that he had been informed that neither the Chairman nor Vice Chairman were able to attend the meetings scheduled for Tuesday 16 June 2009. Therefore subject to confirmation that the Chairman or Vice Chairman were available the previous Tuesday, the June Corporation meeting was re-scheduled for 7.00 pm Tuesday 9 June 2009. The Clerk hoped that 16 June 2009 might be utilised for Governor Training.

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

12.9 Annual Appraisal of Clerk

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