

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of Corporation Meeting
21 October 2009, Board Room, King's Lynn
10.00 am**

Present	Peter Dixon	Chair
	Roger Almond	Di Atkinson
	Sharon Cambridge	Andrew Cave
	Jamie Cook	Paul Cotton
	Cheri Crosley	Nick Daubney
	Charlotte Johnson	David Steele
	Derek Stringer	Roger Ward
	Sandy Willatt	
	David Pomfret	Principal
Attending	Jill Francis	Executive Director, Partnerships (part)
	Arlene Clark	Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning
	Michelle Preston	Student Support Adviser
	Hilary Reid	Clerk to the Corporation

The meeting was preceded by a briefing led by Andrew England, Head of Organisational Development and Quality, on "The Framework for Excellence".

The Chair welcomed the new Student Governors – Jamie Cook and Charlotte Johnson – to their first Board meeting. The new Governors introduced themselves.

1 Apologies

Kate Atherton, Jack Bantoft, Kate Barnett.

2 Minutes of previous Meeting – 8 July 2009

The Minutes of the meeting of 8 July 2009 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4 (a) Resignations

The resignation of Yvette Pratt and Chris Barnes, Staff Governors, was noted.

(b) Appointments

The election of the Student Governors, Jamie Cook and Charlotte Johnson, by the Students' Union was endorsed.

Sharon Cave proposed, seconded by Peter Dixon, that Jamie Cook and Charlotte Johnson be appointed to the Board for a term not exceeding their course of study to a maximum of 4 years. Agreed.

(c) Re-appointment

The review of the term of office of Andrew Cave, Governor, by the Search Committee at its meeting on 14 October 2009 was noted and its recommendation supported.

Derek Stringer proposed, seconded by David Steele, that Andrew Cave be re-appointed to the Board for a further term of four years effective from December 2009. Agreed.

5 Reports from Students' Union

(i) Norfolk Campuses

The Student Governor, Norfolk, reported verbally. She drew attention to the following points:

- Alleged promises of funding from the Learner Support Fund which had not been forthcoming.

The Executive Director Curriculum and Learning responded. Funds were limited and LSC had been asked for additional money. The message to students that reimbursement from the Learner Support Fund was not guaranteed and that only a maximum of 75% of any request would be met would be reinforced through written guidance.

- Support for students with physical and learning disabilities was delayed at the beginning of the academic year. In the case quoted, needs had not been met for six weeks at the commencement of the term although information was made available in January 2009.

The Executive Director Curriculum and Learning responded. Learner Support funds were, in the main, used to meet special needs for Level 1 and 2. Level 3 students received support last and this was an issue with the Government Department providing funding. Difficulties in recruiting Learning Support Officers was being experienced also. The Principal added that the College needed to improve.

- Difficulties parking on campus meant teachers and students were late for class and parking "on street" had resulted in confrontations with residents.

The Principal responded acknowledging the problem and difficulties experienced. Parking needed to be managed and it would be useful to seek students' views on a travel plan/parking policy.

(ii) Cambridgeshire Campuses

The Student Governor, Cambridgeshire, reported verbally. He drew attention to the following points:

- Requests for a cash machine on campus were being received from a number of students. A secondary request was for a chip and pin machine in the Refectory.

The Principal responded that provision of a cash machine facility had to be in partnership with a bank and the College had been unable to generate any interest from the sector. The suggestion of a chip and pin facility would be investigated and a report-back made to a future meeting.

- Health and safety issues were arising around a pathway used as a smoking area – people had to divert onto a grassy bank as they moved between locations with a risk of slipping.

Governors suggested a pathway be created across the hill.

- Students were complaining about the introduction of a small charge for printing – some were finding it difficult to pay.

The Principal responded that a review was required to address the needs of students who may be disadvantaged.

The reports and action points were noted.

6 Management Accounts to 30 September 2009

The management accounts had not been available for the meeting. Item 7 refers.

7 Financial Results 2008/09

The Principal reported in the absence of the Executive Director Finance and Information. He presented the provisional financial results for the year to 31 July 2009. The following key points were highlighted:

- A near break-even position had been achieved against the re-forecast deficit of £1.2m but with this came significant health warnings
- Some outstanding downward adjustments remained to be made to the accounts for increased depreciation resulting from an impairment review of buildings and the Cambridgeshire LGPS settlement
- An uplift to the Train to Gain contract from £1.5m to £1.8m had been secured
- The LSC had agreed in-year contract growth in Apprenticeships income and it was expected that contract value would be exceeded again in 2009/10.
- HE and FE fee income had exceeded re-forecast projections
- Underlying pay costs were slightly below budget. Additional costs of circa £500k were accounted for by restructure.
- Property costs had been managed within budget but there was an increasing maintenance backlog
- Other non-pay costs had been managed tightly
- The net impact of the capital write-off was in excess of £7m. The government's decisions have had a sector-wide impact on balance sheets.
- The impairment review will impact on depreciation costs, balance sheet values and have on-going implications for future budgets
- The settlement of the Cambridgeshire Local Government Pension Scheme (circa £1m) had not been included in the net deficit figure of £48k

8 Report Chair's action – Reduction in borrowing facility 22 July 2009

The Principal reported that the borrowing facility with the Lloyds TSB bank relating to the Big Build programme had been lowered to £10m to 31 July 2011. The facility was being retained for the time being, pending redevelopment of the college's estates strategy.

Members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee had been consulted on the decision, taken primarily to reduce the non-utilisation fee, and the action had been approved by the Chair of the Corporation.

Governors noted the action taken and endorsed the decision.

9 LSC Targets and Student Numbers

The Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning, presented a report providing information on LSC Targets and Student Numbers. She explained that 2008/09 outturn for 16-18 year olds was 280 learner numbers above target but 35 Student Learner Numbers (SLNs) below which meant the per learner funding was reduced.

In response to a governor's query the Executive Director explained the methodology for calculating SLNs.

Early indications for 2009/10 were that recruitment for 16-18s was strong with an increased demand for full-time provision. This could impact on the College's ability to make provision available later in the academic year and its ability to incorporate additional study options within the offer. It seemed likely that the LSC trend to set higher recruitment targets and yet reduce funding would continue.

The current position was noted.

10 Principal's Strategy Report

The Principal reported on the following areas of strategic significance.

(1) Restructure Progress Update

The restructure process had been implemented but there remained a small number of unresolved issues in relation to staff matters. Training needs for staff assimilated into posts had been recognised and Heads of Faculty workloads, Assessor case loads, targets and achievements would continue to be monitored. SMT were also working to improve morale and confidence in the organisation.

Future steps to be taken by management included a review of Property Services Department and Foundation and Skills for Life Faculty structures; coaching and management development activities to support the new structure; and, a review of the curriculum structure.

Noted.

(2) Health and Safety Executive Investigation Update

This item was deemed to be "Confidential" and the subject of Legal Professional Privilege.

(3) Creation of Alternative Workshop Facilities Progress Report

Over the summer period, the Workshop Block had been de-commissioned and alternative facilities sought off-site. Two alternative venues on the Hardwick and Austin Fields industrial estates together with mobile/temporary constructions on campus were identified and progress towards establishing fully operational workshops covering the areas described in the report was nearing conclusion.

The actions taken and the commitment and hard work of staff involved were commended by governors.

Heads of Terms for a one year rental agreement (with option to extend) to utilise the Open Road motor vehicle training centre on the Hardwick industrial estate had been signed. Contracts had been signed for a two-year lease for use of the Polar Systems industrial unit on Austin Fields industrial estate. Additional mobile facilities had been rented for student use and storage on that site and further temporary mobile facilities had been purchased and installed on campus.

Governors acknowledged the need to secure accommodation for the medium to longer term and were receptive to a proposal to extend the Polar Systems lease beyond 2 years on the Austin Field industrial estate.

Derek Stringer seconded the Principal's proposal to seek an option to extend the lease of the Polar Systems premises beyond two years and to secure an extension to the use of the Open Road facility longer term. Agreed.

(4) Academy Update

This item was deemed to be "Confidential".

(5) Becta Technology Exemplar Status

The College's successful application to become an Exemplar Provider was applauded. As well as national recognition, revenue and capital of £20k and £30k, respectively, were to be made available to continue developing new areas of ILT best practice and to showcase to others.

Noted.

11 Review of Corporate Goals and KPIs 2008-2009

Corporate Goals - The Principal presented a summary of College performance against the Corporate Goals established for the last academic year. He invited comments and observations from the Board, noted as follows:

- **HR** – Could this include health and safety targets in future?
- **HE** – 10% increase in recruitment not achieved. Future targets set by ARU and subject to funding.
- **Sickness/absence** – New policy to address high absence rate.

Achievement, retention and success rates - The Principal referred Governors to the bar charts appended to his report illustrating a decline in overall performance in 2007/08 and a similar outcome for 2008/09. Benchmarks had continued to rise and there was some potential to improve College performance.

Key Performance Indicators – The Principal highlighted the following points from the KPIs: the staff turnover rate had declined slightly; high levels of sickness/absence; strong governor attendance rates; positive teaching grades at national average or above; improved teacher qualifications statistics; and, extremely strong outcomes in Employer Engagement.

The report and outcomes were noted.

Jill Francis joined the meeting.

12 Safeguarding

The Executive Director, Partnerships, presented a report to draw attention to the new common inspection framework and its high profile approach to safeguarding. She emphasised its importance in relation to its contribution to grades for outcomes for learners and leadership and management.

The Executive Director explained the minimum requirements in order to achieve a “satisfactory” grade at inspection. She advised that to retain an “outstanding” grade the minimum requirements had to be exceeded and that being compliant was no longer sufficient to warrant a higher grade. A “satisfactory” grade for safeguarding would limit the overall grade to be awarded by the inspectorate.

To be “outstanding” in leadership and management the following, amongst other actions, would be needed:

- A thorough and comprehensive training programme for governors
- Thorough and comprehensive vetting and barring procedures for governors
- Clear methods for reporting to governors and dealing with any issues on health and safety and safeguarding

Roger Ward proposed, seconded by Andrew Cave, that the three requirements detailed above be adopted and that CRB checks for governors be put in hand immediately. Agreed with two abstentions. *(Student Governors also abstained from the vote.)*

Jill Francis left the meeting at 12.30 pm.

13 Governor Planning Half Day 21 April 2010

The Principal referred governors to his paper containing proposals for the Governor Planning Half Day on 21 April 2010.

It was agreed that the focus should be on governor training in safeguarding and that it was imperative for all members to attend.

14 Report-back from ACER Governor Workshop

Roger Ward, supported by Roger Almond, provided detailed feedback from the ACER Governor Workshop held on 9 July 2009 at the British Racing School, Newmarket.

The key messages had been:

- Impact of a possible change of government
- The view that “satisfactory” inspection grade would no longer be acceptable
- It was important for FE colleges to retain flexibility
- Increasing use of technology for communication with governors
- Changes to the structure of governing bodies akin to the NHS
- Training for the sector to meet future needs
- Strong resistance to remuneration for governors

The report was noted.

Nick Daubney left the meeting at 12.45 pm

15 Clerk's Items

The Clerk presented the following items for information and consideration by members:

(i) Assessing the Performance of the Board 2008/09

Governors considered the results of the self-assessment process conducted at the end of the academic year 2008/09 and an overview of the perceptions of members as to the Board's performance. They were advised that Search Committee had considered the findings in detail.

The proposed action plan was noted and it was agreed that the pro forma employed for the survey would be reviewed for 2009/10.

(ii) Annual Review of Governor Attendance 2008/09

The Search Committee had examined in detail the attendance records of governors during the academic year 2008/09 and were pleased to report a 1% improvement in average attendance levels from 86% to 87% over the period 2007/08. There were no areas of concern.

The positive trend was noted.

(iii) Staff Governor Elections

In considering the response to the recent invitation for nominations to the role of Staff Governor across all campuses, the Board were advised that there had been no candidates forthcoming from the Cambridgeshire sites.

Subsequently, Search Committee had been asked to review the current election arrangements. On the advice of Search Committee it was recommended that:

- 1. The current election process should continue for the Norfolk sites and be run again for Cambridgeshire;**
- 2. Any future election process should reflect the options set out in the Instrument and Articles of Government;**
- 3. Search Committee be remitted to review the election procedure.**

Agreed.

Di Atkinson left the meeting at 1.00 pm

16 Minutes of Committee Meetings and Working Groups

(i) Audit Committee 10 June 2009

Cheri Crosley, Chair of the Committee, proposed the Minutes for adoption. She reported the audits of key financial controls and payroll and referred to the annual review of all outstanding audit recommendations. There had been an on-going problem of managers not responding to audit recommendations and SMT had

introduced a new process to monitor progress more closely. Further, the Auditors, at their pre-meeting with the Committee, had flagged up management stress.

(ii) Employment Policy Committee 17 June 2009

Derek Stringer, Chair of the Committee, proposed the Minutes for adoption. He confirmed that the annual pay settlement of 0% had been accepted. The Committee had recommended adoption of the Single Equality and Diversity Policy to Corporation on 8 July 2009 and had considered the Audit Committee's reference to them re succession planning for key posts.

(iii) Remuneration Committee 17 June 2009

Sharon Cambridge, Chair of the Committee, proposed the Minutes for adoption. The Committee had considered the salaries of designated senior post holders and the Clerk. The outcome mirrored the decision for all staff.

(iv) Search Committee 17 June 2009

Peter Dixon, Chair of the Committee, proposed the Minutes for adoption. The Corporation had approved the new procedure for the appointment of Chair and Vice Chair to the Board on 5 June 2009. Subsequently, Peter Dixon and Sharon Cambridge had been elected Chair and Vice Chair of Governors, respectively, at the Board meeting on 8 July 2009. The revised Committee structure was also adopted on 8 July 2009.

In reviewing attendance and the composition of Audit Committee, and noting the vacancy, members were asked by the Chair to express interest in a place on that Committee, failing which, it was agreed that Search Committee should consider co-opting a member with appropriate skills and experience.

(v) Finance and General Purposes Committee 19 June 2009

Andrew Cave, Chair of the Committee, proposed the Minutes for adoption. He referred to the major considerations raised under the Financial Plan and Budget for 2009/10 at their meeting in June, reiterated at Corporation in July and again in this meeting. In particular, he noted the write-off of costs, the future financial position, and the focus on cost-cutting in Committee discussion.

(vi) Property Steering Group 23 June 2009

The Principal proposed the Minutes for adoption. He confirmed that the Planning Day held on 7 October 2009 had provided a full update on the current position.

Paul Cotton moved adoption of the Minutes, en bloc, seconded by David Steele. Agreed unanimously.

17 Any Other Business

- (i)** At Jack Bantoff's request, the Clerk wished to record that JB had recently successfully completed Norfolk County Council's one day Safer Recruitment course for school governors and headteachers.

18 Date and venue for next Meeting

Wednesday, 9 December 2009 at King's Lynn

The meeting closed at 1.10 pm