



GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of Meeting on Thursday 6 April 2017

Present:	Mr J Kirk (<i>Chair</i>)	Chair of Governors
	Ms N Cuffy	Governor
	Ms S Gannon	Staff Governor
	Mr S Holderness	Vice-Chair of Governors
	Ms M Moore	Governor
	Ms S Munden	Staff Governor
	Mr J Pain	Governor
	Mr M Sim	Principal
	Mr H Solanki	Parent Governor
	Ms A Touseef	Student Governor
In Attendance:	Mr J Bagley	Vice-Principal Curriculum
	Mr P Phillipson	Education Funding Agency
	Mr H Ravat	Vice-Principal Resources
	Ms A Suddaby	Leicester City Council
	Mr R Mansfield	Clerk

Ref.		Action
B/17/22	<p>Item 1 – Attendance and Membership Matters:</p> <p><i>1.1 Apologies for Absence</i> Apologies for absence were received from Harnish Hadani, Savannah Kacha, Ralph Wood and Lisa Hawes. John Kirk welcomed Paul Phillipson and Adam Suddaby to the meeting as observers. The meeting was declared quorate.</p> <p><i>1.2 Declarations of Interest in Agenda Items</i> There were no declarations of interest in agenda items.</p> <p><i>1.3 Governor Vacancies</i> Robert Mansfield reported that there was a current vacancy for a governor with expertise in business and finance. John Kirk was exploring potential local sources.</p>	
B/17/23	<p>Item 2 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising:</p> <p><i>2.1 Minutes of Meeting on 9 March 2017</i> The minutes of the meeting on 9 March 2017 were accepted as an accurate record and were duly signed by John Kirk.</p>	

2.2 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The only matter arising from the minutes was covered by the Principal's report (item 3 below).

B/17/24

Item 3 – Principal's Report:

Martin Sim made an audio-visual presentation after nearly four weeks in post. He had found his initial experience of working at the College exhilarating. During this period he had undertaken a full review and had begun action to restore the College to its previous good health. He had found plenty of evidence of good practice and had encountered little resistance to change.

He summarized the key issues for the sector as funding and a strong focus on employability and progression.

The current priority for the College was to improve success rates. Action since his arrival to improve attendance appeared to be bearing fruit, with a rise of about 3%. There was a need for culture change, based on effective facilitative processes to underpin sustainable change. He had looked at structures and saw a need for greater clarity in leadership roles. Naz Leivas-Mistry would not be replaced, as quality had been successfully incorporated into the role of James Bagley. The Directors of Study had been re-designated Assistant Principals to signal the authority delegated to them. There was a need for greater understanding and more consistent and timely application of processes – coupled with challenge, where any were found not to be effective. Martin Sim said that he believed in the judicious combination of 'carrot and stick', and that successes should be celebrated.

He had concluded that the roles of the Programme Area Managers were probably not doable, and needed to be addressed. He was looking to divide these roles into Heads of Department (curriculum-focused) and Heads of Schools (pastoral appointments concerned with students at different levels).

He did not believe that all students were on the right courses, and saw opportunities for more economical sharing of the curriculum with other local sixth form colleges and Leicester College. He intended to ensure that the College had robust processes in place by September 2017. Some additional lower level leadership posts might be enabled through 'funding bursaries'. He saw ahead a narrower range of programmes more closely linked to progression, with a robust admissions process backed up by an effective disciplinary process. The College's current practice in respect of student attendance and the submission of work was lax. He had high expectations of staff as well as students, and would therefore give priority to

workforce development. He had every confidence in the College's staff.

Jim Pain congratulated Martin Sim upon an excellent presentation. Jim Pain had been most concerned at the length of the list of subjects with adverse ratings from OfSTED. Martin Sim said that there had been a lack of robustness in putting learners on the right courses. As a result some teachers were teaching too wide a range of courses (very few could teach successfully both A level and BTEC programmes) and there were too many part-time teachers. Further analysis was needed before remedial action was initiated.

The meeting received the Principal's report.

B/17/25

Item 4 – Curriculum and Quality Issues:

4.1 Notes of Meeting of Performance Improvement Group 16 March 2017

John Kirk reminded the meeting that the Performance Improvement Group was now focused solely upon the monitoring of the Post-Inspection Action Plan (PIAP). The PIAP had been rewritten in a clearer form and was updated prior to each meeting of the Group. The meeting had agreed how progress was to be RAG rated. Most time had been spent on reviewing actions and progress relating to teaching learning and assessment.

The meeting received the notes of the meeting of the Performance Improvement Group.

4.2 Minutes of the Standards & Quality Committee 4 April 2017

John Kirk presented the draft minutes of the meeting of the Standards & Quality Committee on 4 April 2017. The Committee had considered data on achievement, retention and attendance. Retention had been shown to be above national benchmarks, but achievement was well below. Martin Sim's analysis had been that some students were on the wrong courses, and that changes to curriculum and admissions were needed. A report on support contracts provided evidence of poor administration of the College's policies. The latest Grade Book data had appeared very positive, although the meeting had been reminded that the data were based upon teachers' assessments and were probably on balance optimistic. The data appeared to show that value added was headed towards the middle of national tables, a position that would be very satisfactory if correct. The Strategic Plan was to be rewritten, so that in future other plans would form its subordinate elements.

Nelista Cuffy said that she had found Martin Sim's description of the 'carrots' being awarded to good attenders of special

interest. Martin Sim then summarized the scheme for rewarding high attenders through entry to a prize raffle.

The meeting received the minutes of the Standards & Quality Committee.

B/17/26

Item 5– Student Issues:

5.1 Minutes of the Student Affairs Committee 3 April 2017

Alishah Touseef presented the draft minutes of the meeting of the Student Affairs Committee on 3 April 2017. The main matters discussed had been the voucher raffle scheme just introduced to encourage high attendance; the findings of a recent survey evidencing student concerns about shortage of study space, computing facilities and gaps in timetables; examination leave during examinations; the end-of-year event; and a Mexican themed event in the canteen.

Jim Pain asked why students had stated that afternoon lessons were less productive. Alishah Touseef said that students were better able to concentrate in the morning. Martin Sim said that the College needed to coach students to make productive use of study time, though he agreed that the gaps in some study programmes were not acceptable.

The meeting received the minutes of the Student Affairs Committee.

B/17/27

Item 6 – Finance and Staffing Issues:

6.1 Minutes of the Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee 23 March 2017

Steve Holderness presented the draft minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee on 23 March 2017. The key points were as follows.

Detailed planning approval had been granted for the Blackbird Road site, and completion of the sale was expected within the current academic year.

The Committee was to receive a report on independent learning space at its meeting in May: this was to address space utilization, students' awareness of the space available and opportunities in the short term to increase such space. There had been a small year-on-year rise in reported health and safety incidents. The rise was attributable to health-related incidents.

Learner numbers had declined by about 70 to around 1,650 since the first census. Martin Sim had said that a narrower curriculum with larger classes and a smarter timetable were required to create a platform for sustainable growth. The next year was likely to see a reduction in learner numbers and an improvement in results.

The accounts showed an adverse variance of £184K in the income and expenditure account, almost entirely attributable to pay costs, especially those of teachers. The College had recently secured an additional grant of £100K from Leicester City Council for high needs learners. Jim Pain asked how much of the variance related to pensions. Hamid Ravat said that changes in pension contributions had already been built into the budget. The variance in pay had arisen because of the combined effects of an increase in learners and a reduction in the average class size. The predicted deficit for the year had risen to about £250K. The Committee had made clear that continuing poor results would be unacceptable. The underlying financial position however remained healthy. Pay needed to be reduced to no more than 70% of income. The funding allocation for 2017/2018 showed that although funding would be increased to reflect current learner numbers, protection funding would have ceased and the number of small programmes approved in the previous year would have an adverse effect on average funding per student.

The staffing report showed that FTE numbers were five above budget. The Committee had urged the College to give full consideration to internal candidates when seeking to fill vacancies. John Kirk asked whether the planned rationalization of the curriculum would resolve the issue of staffing costs. Martin Sim said that he believed so. All vacancies should be subject to challenge and there should also be better management of those on long term sickness. He agreed that staff costs should be kept at no more than 70% of income in the budget for 2017/2018 and should thereafter be managed towards the national benchmark for FE colleges. He hoped to achieve the required changes through natural wastage. September 2017 would be a critical time. John Kirk said that the relatively high percentage of part-time teachers needed also to be addressed. Martin Sim said that part-timers had already agreed to increase their hours, where this was possible, in order to reduce the costs of supply staff.

Jim Pain asked whether Hamid Ravat was concerned about the financial health of the College. Hamid Ravat said that the College could carry the current year's deficit without difficulty, but there needed to be effective plans for the next two years. Steve Holderness said that the Committee had made clear that a robust approach was needed. Jim Pain emphasized that the deficit must not be allowed to run out of control. Martin Sim said that, although the College had a strong balance sheet, it was unthinkable that staff costs could be allowed to remain above 70% of income.

Steve Holderness then referred to the recent parents' evening and discussions indicating that the timing and focus of such events needed some modification. In answer to Nelista Cuffy, Hamid Ravat said that the events were described as consultation days and were directed at parents and carers. Steve Holderness reported that at the recent HE Fair 25% of the institutions attending were 'high tariff' universities. The Committee had noted that an effective programme for gifted and talented students was required.

Martin Sim had reported concerns from staff about the future of the College and his own concerns about the possible loss of key people. Paul Phillipson said that the outcome of the Area-Based Review was to be published in early May and was not yet in the public domain. Jim Pain asked whether the College would be truly free to consider its future direction, and said he remained unconvinced after receiving assurances on this.

Martin Sim said that he had discussed the concerns mentioned with John Kirk, and then gave his own assessment of the College's situation. Any decision about its future was some way off. The College had an opportunity to focus on quality and to regain its former position of strength. Jim Pain asked whether the Board had powers to decide to remain independent. Martin Sim said that this was a matter of concern to staff which he would address. The Commissioner for Sixth Form Colleges had made clear that the College was financially capable of standing alone. The Board had the power to decide to do so, but there were risks in taking such a decision at the present time.

Steve Holderness concluded his report by advising the meeting that the Committee had received a letter from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) confirming that the EFA had assessed the College's actual and underlying financial health in 2015/2016 as outstanding.

The meeting received the minutes of the Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee.

B/17/28

Item 7 – Governance Issues:

7.1 Minutes of the Audit Committee 14 March 2017

In the absence of Harnish Hadani, Hamid Ravat presented the draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee on 14 March 2017. The main business had been the report of ICCA ETS on the block of internal audits conducted earlier in the current year. He listed the audit topics. The reports had specified the level of assurance for each; these had been rated as 'substantial' in every instance other than Mock Funding Audit which had been assessed as 'reasonable'. The reports had provided governors with considerable comfort.

The Committee had also considered the risk register and had requested various amendments. These had been incorporated into the version before the meeting as item 8.2. The Committee had agreed to bring forward business previously conducted in September to June, in order to ease the demands on senior leaders at a busy time.

The meeting received the minutes of the Audit Committee.

7.2 Risk Register

Robert Mansfield presented the risk register 'hot spots'. The profile of the risks to which the College was exposed had changed very little, although a risk relating to added value under-performance had been added.

The meeting received the risk register.

7.3 Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee

Robert Mansfield presented the terms of reference of the Audit Committee. This contained modifications commended by the Committee and brought the terms of reference into compliance with the latest Joint Audit Code of Practice.

The meeting endorsed the terms of reference of the Audit Committee.

7.4 Public Access and Confidentiality Policy

Robert Mansfield presented the public access and confidentiality policy for ratification. The policy had been subject to minor textual improvements and the addition of a paragraph clarifying access to governors' meetings. The policy had been commended by the Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee.

The meeting endorsed the public access and confidentiality policy.

B/17/29 Item 8 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:

The date and time of the next meeting were confirmed as Thursday 1 June 2017 at 5.30 p.m. at the College.

B/17/30 Item 9 – Any Other Business:

Hamid Ravat was granted leave to introduce an oral report on the latest developments in respect of the Blackbird Road land. After adjustments for planning conditions to the gross price agreed, the net price amounted to less than the originally agreed minimum price of £7 million. The developer would be asked to confirm that the minimum agreed price would be honoured. The College's share of the sale proceeds would be 63% of £7 million. Hamid Ravat invited the Board to approve the sale of the land at this price. He would inform the

appropriate department within the EFA of the current position. He advised the meeting that the College had no financial interest in the outcome, as the figure was far below the maximum repayable to the EFA in respect of the land, though he felt that the College had a duty to ensure the best return possible to the Exchequer. Robert Mansfield advised the meeting that it should also consider the possibility that the developer might seek to negotiate a figure below the agreed minimum price. The stance that might be taken by Leicester City Council, as co-owners of the land, was unclear.

The meeting resolved to accept the agreed minimum price for the Blackbird Road land and authorized Chair's action in the event that the developer sought to renegotiate this figure.

Staff and Student Governors and senior members of staff then left the meeting, which remained quorate.

B/17/31 Item 10 – Confidential Item:

10.1 Minutes of Confidential Session 9 March 2017

Robert Mansfield presented the minutes of the confidential session on 9 March 2017. The actions arising had all been taken. John Kirk signed the minutes as an accurate record.