

Minutes of the Stourbridge College Corporation Meeting
held at 4:30pm on Thursday 21st October 2010
at Dudley Infracare LIFT, Venture Way, Brierley Hill

Present:

Amanda Bache
Lynette Cutting (Principal)
Steve Davies
Julia Fitzsimmons
Ian Hart
Tim Heaney
Dennis Hodson
Henrietta Kubwimana (Student Governor)
David Nolan (Chair)
Brett O'Reilly (Staff Governor)
Tony Seaton
Tom Skidmore (Student Governor)
Tim Sunter (Vice-Chair)

In attendance:

David Beasley (Interim Clerk)
Elaine Giles (Vice-Principal)
Louise Jones (Vice-Principal)
Steve Cutler (Assistant Principal)

1 Welcome & Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 The Chair introduced the meeting by welcoming everyone, particularly Amanda Bache (business governor), Tom Skidmore and Henrietta Kubwimana (recently elected student governors) who were attending their first Corporation meeting. The Chair invited all present to introduce themselves noting that there had been a number of new governors appointed during the year.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence had been received from Fred Bentley, John Coyne, David Darlaston, Jenni Ord and Nellie Sayer.

2 Declaration of Interests

- 2.1 No interests were declared.

3 Governance Items3a Tim Sunter

The Chair advised that Tim Sunter would complete his probationary year as a governor on 11 November 2010 and invited members to confirm his appointment for the remaining two years of his three year term; this was approved unanimously.

The Corporation resolved:

That Tim Sunter's appointment as a Governor of the College be confirmed for the full 3-year term of office, to 11 November 2012.

3b New Staff & Student Governors

The Chair advised that Nellie Sayer's term of office as a staff governor was ending on 21 November 2010, and so this would have been her final Corporation meeting. He recorded his

thanks for her service during the past three years and informed members that Tracey Pearce had recently been elected as the new teaching staff governor.

The Corporation resolved¹:

- (1) To approve Tracey Pearce's appointment as a Staff Governor of the College with effect from 22 November 2010 for a three year term, the first year of which being probationary.
- (2) To approve Tom Skidmore and Henrietta Kubwimana's appointments as Student Governors of the College with effect from the date of their election (15 October 2010) for a term of one year.

3c Rosemary Slater

The Chair advised members that Rosemary Slater, the previous Chair of the Corporation, was retiring as governor as under the rules in place she had served the maximum term of office provided for. She had served on the governing body for many years, had seen the college through some difficult times and had been a great asset to the Corporation. An event would be arranged to mark her retirement.

4 Minutes of Previous Meetings

- 4.1 The minutes of the Corporation meetings held on 15 July 2010 and 23 September 2010 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

5 Matters Arising

5.1 Confidential Item, minuted separately

5.2 Confidential Item, minuted separately

5.3 Board Peer Review (from meeting of 23 September 2010)

- 5.3.1 Louise Jones reminded the Board that the suggestion of a Board peer review process had come from the Governors' Self-Assessment. Jenni Ord had submitted some material for discussion on the topic; this would be reviewed and brought back to the Board.

5.4 New Campus Name (from meeting of 23 September 2010)

- 5.4.1 The Chair referred to the discussions on the subject at the previous meeting, noting the differing opinions that existed on the subject, and requested that if anyone had any major issue with naming the new campus 'Merry Hill Campus at Brierley Hill' they should advise the Clerk. The Principal confirmed that 'Stourbridge College' would be on the signs.

6 Chair and Principal's Report

- 6.1 The Chair said that he was conscious that there was a large number of governors new in post so it would be beneficial to review what was required in the way of training as soon as possible and have an up-to-date governance manual in place. The Governors' Code of Practice was in the process of being updated and training was also being looked into, including the use of on-line materials. He observed that good governance was a key factor moving forward, part of which was an appropriate appraisal process. The Principal advised that an induction event was being organised by the Clerk as an initial step. The Chair said that there was a huge schism with the changes in the funding scenario, so it was important to tackle the governance challenge as soon as possible. Tony Seaton commented that the governance area of the college web site was out of date; the Chair confirmed that this topic was on the list of items being reviewed. He suggested that it needed to be more interactive and help governors to focus on the key issues. The Principal said that there was a lot of work to do in this whole area, including embracing e-governance practices where appropriate. The

¹ Clerk's note: staff and student representatives elected as governors are required to be appointed formally by the Corporation and are subject to the statutory eligibility requirements.

Chair confirmed that the intention would be to hold a review with the governors in the early part of 2011.

- 6.2 The Principal reported that the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement was being assessed by the Executive; the headlines had confirmed the expectations so far. More targeted support would mean that fewer people would receive Educational Maintenance Allowance thereby putting more pressure on student numbers, and likewise with the introduction of additional fees. Ian Hart commented that students could be accumulating a year's debts from HE before starting a FE course. The Principal said that Louise Jones and Steve Cutler would be continuing to assess the impact of the CSR and would bring back their assessment to the December Board Meeting.

7 Items Requiring Governors' Urgent Attention

7a Health and Safety (including Safeguarding)

Steve Davies advised that he had no items to raise as he had only recently agreed to be the governors' representative on these matters. Louise Jones said that there weren't any items that needed to be deliberated on by members, and said that the Annual Health and Safety Report provided an overview of the topics and issues addressed during 2009/2010.

7b Equality & Diversity

Elaine Giles confirmed that there were no issues for consideration at this time.

7c The Student Voice

Ian Hart said that this topic would be covered later under the Students, Curriculum and Quality Assurance Committee agenda item.

8 Reports from Finance, Resources & Property Committee

8a Committee Meeting of 7 October 2010

Steve Davies reported that the meeting of the Committee had been thorough. Two reports had been brought forward to Corporation for approval, the revised budget and the Partner Contracting Plan, and five reports for information. He said that the college's senior staff had done a thorough job and that he was pleased with the progress achieved and the level of information provided to the Committee. He reported that the revised budget for 2010/2011 improved the overall budget surplus by £2K to £15K, and that there had been a net income growth of approximately £1M arising from the new 'Route into Work' contract. The Committee was recommending the approval of the revised budget. He explained that the Partner Contracting Plan included a comprehensive list of the college's partners and an associated risk matrix so the information was confidential to the Board. The Committee was recommending the approval of the plan.

Reports for Approval

8b Revised Budget 2010/2011

Steve Cutler explained that the original budget had been approved by the Corporation in July and the revision had been made to reflect amendments made to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) contract. The key change was the overall increase in income of £1,057K resulting from the Route into Work contract, offset by a number of expenditure adjustments some of which were related to the related increase in staff posts and an associated pay budget increase of £571K, together with an increase in the non-pay budget of £483K associated mainly with associated additional delivery costs for the contract, resulting in an overall budget surplus of £15K.

The Chair asked concerning the process for approving new staff posts associated with the new income stream. Louise Jones advised that the approval process was with the College

Executive Group. In reply to the Chair, Louise Jones confirmed that the contingency against the Energy Training Centre had been released to reflect the reduction in the associated target income and hence enable the original budget to be met.

Elaine Giles advised that for the Young Persons' Guarantee' programme for 18-24 year olds, the college was finding that they were having to invite four times as many people as places in order to get the numbers applying. This was a big challenge given that it was not a mandatory programme. The Principal added that the college was working hard to bring people onto the courses.

The Corporation resolved:

That the revised budget for 2010/2011 be approved.

8c Confidential Item, minuted separately

Reports for Information

The following reports had been circulated to members with the meeting agenda for information, having been scrutinised by the committees. In accordance with the governance proposal approved by the Corporation on 18 March 2010, as no questions had been tabled on their content prior to the meeting the reports were noted by the Board without further deliberation.

- 8d. Management Accounts;
- 8e. Property Strategy Update;
- 8f. Learner Responsiveness Funding & Student Numbers Report 2009/2010;
- 8g. Learner Support Fund 2009/2010;
- 8h. Health & Safety Annual Report 2009/2010.

9 Reports from Students, Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee

9a Committee Meeting of 6 October 2010

Ian Hart reported that the inaugural meeting of the committee had been very good, with a lot of detail reviewed and a considerable amount of discussion. With the changes in Equality & Diversity legislation, Louise Jones had confirmed that a consultant had been engaged to advise on issues as the college wanted to be pro-active in this area. Ian Hart said that the Committee had had a very up-beat presentation from Kevin Stevens on the subject of inspections, with the emphasis on being 'inspection-ready'. A Quality Assurance Group was in place, with a particular focus on data. As a result of the tightening of the Ofsted rules it was becoming harder to achieve 'Outstanding' status; there were currently no Outstanding colleges in the West Midlands whereas previously there had been three. Kevin Stevens looked on this as an opportunity for the college.

9b Staff Development Annual Report 2009/2010

Ian Hart said that the Committee had discussed an excellent report on Staff Development; thanks were due to Pauline Hollis and Sandra Parsons.

9c Student Survey Annual Report 2009/2010

Ian Hart reported that the Committee had spent some time looking at the Student Survey as it was an important report. There was recognition within the inspection bodies of needing to give students a say and an influence. He noted that the survey indicated that the students were by and large very happy, but there were a few concerns. The Principal said that she was disappointed that the college had not met the aspirations of students as well as she would have liked, and wanted to make sure that the student governors were keyed into the appraisal process. Tom Skidmore said that one factor that influenced the students' responses in the survey was the impact last year of teaching staff difficulties. The Principal acknowledged that it was a challenging situation when having to bring in temporary staff for lessons.

Ian Hart thought that expectations were important so preparation for the survey was key. Brett O'Reilly agreed, noting that even who was in the room at the time was a factor. Tim Sunter said that it was important that concerns and issues were flagged up so they could be addressed. The Principal said that the college must listen to students even more in the future. The Chair advised that the governors needed to have an appreciation of the students' perceptions and views without usurping the role of the college management.

Ian Hart suggested that contextualisation was important. The Principal confirmed that Elaine Giles would be meeting with the student governors prior to every Corporation meeting to discuss the agenda as well as any potential issues for raising with the Board. The Chair said that this was a good idea and should help considerably. He thanked Tom Skidmore and Henrietta Kubwimana for their input.

As there were no further comments raised on these reports, or on Item 9d 'Compliments and Complaints Report 2009/2010', the reports were noted by the Board for information.

10 Any Other Business

10a Governors' Away Day

The Chair asked members if they had any comments on the Away Day agenda that had been circulated by the Clerk; all were content. The Principal said that she hoped that all the governors would be able to attend. The West Midlands Regional Observatory update would provide a local and regional context, and the other speakers would bring their take on the future. These inputs would assist in reviewing the college's strategic objectives.

11 Dates of Future Meetings

11.1 The latest 2010/2011 Calendar of Meetings, dated 20th October 2010, was tabled by the Clerk. The dates of the Corporation meetings for the remainder of the academic year are:

Friday 3rd December 2010 at 13:00 [Away Day event]
Thursday 9th December 2010 at 16:30
Thursday 31st March 2011 at 16:30
Thursday 28th April 2011 at 16:30 [Strategic Planning]
Thursday 26th May 2011 at 16:30
Thursday 7th July 2011 at 16:30

The meeting closed at 6:20pm.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairman