

**Minutes of the Stourbridge College Corporation Meeting  
(Strategy & Development)  
held on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2011 at 4:00pm  
in the Board Room, Art & Design Centre**

**Present:**

Amanda Bache  
Lynette Cutting (Principal)  
Rishma Dattani  
Steve Davies  
Julia Fitzsimmons  
Tim Heaney  
Dennis Hodson  
David Nolan (Chair)  
Jenni Ord  
Tracey Pearce  
Tim Sunter (Vice Chair)  
Matt Ward

**In attendance:**

David Beasley (Clerk)  
Louise Jones (Vice Principal)  
Elaine Giles (Vice Principal)  
Steve Cutler (Assistant Principal)  
Kim Babb (Director, Business Skills) p/t  
Russ Henry (Assistant Principal) p/t  
Andy Sylvester (Assistant Principal) p/t

**Preliminary Item – The Wolf Report**

Russ Henry, the Assistant Principal for Vocational and Professional Studies, gave a presentation on the recommendations and implications of The Wolf Report on vocational education that had been commissioned by the government earlier this year. He highlighted the focus in the report on programmes of study and on attainment in English and Mathematics, plus the ability for colleges to enrol 14-16 year old students and the broadening of the scope of apprenticeships. He suggested that there was a significant business opportunity for the College for pre-16 students and that even more emphasis would need to be placed on links with employers. The Chair thanked him for his presentation and said that some of the themes would be re-visited at the Governors' Away Day.

**1 Apologies for Absence**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from John Coyne, David Darlaston, Henrietta Dalton, Brett O'Reilly and Tony Seaton. The Clerk reported that Brett O'Reilly was leaving the College at the end of the month and as a consequence an election was being arranged for a new Support Staff Governor. The Chair recorded his thanks for Brett O'Reilly's contribution to the Corporation during his time as a governor.

**2a Declaration of Interests**

- 2a.1 Amanda Bache noted her interest as related to Item 7 on the Agenda, the Appointment of the College Bankers.

**2b Appointment of Mr Matt Ward as Governor**

- 2b.1 The Chair advised that the Governance & Search Committee had interviewed Mr Matt Ward and was recommending his appointment as a governor and as a member of the Finance,

Resources & Property Committee. His details had been circulated to members with the agenda.

**The Corporation resolved:**

To approve the appointment of Matt Ward as a Governor of Stourbridge College with effect from 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2011 for a four year term, the first year being probationary.

[Matt Ward joined the meeting at this point.]

**3 Financial Management & Control Evaluation**

- 3.1 Steve Cutler, Assistant Principal Finance & Information, gave a presentation on the Financial Management & Control Evaluation (FMCE), explaining the process of preparing the Return as required by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), which covered the following topics: Strategic Oversight, Operational Oversight, Sub-Contracting Arrangements, Long-term and Short-term Financial Planning, Risk Management, Internal Control Systems and Financial Monitoring. He gave the current view of the grade in each FMCE section based on the College's assessment, a mixture of Good and Outstanding grades. The Clerk noted that the SFA had recently revised the indicative grade criteria and these were being reviewed for their impact. The FMCE Return would be presented to the Audit Committee prior to its submission to the SFA at the end of the year.
- 3.2 Governors asked concerning the Leadership and Management link between the assessment grades arrived at for the FMCE and the grades for the curriculum areas contained in the initial draft Self-Assessment Report (SAR). Steve Cutler said that this would be taken into account during the finalising of the FMCE Return and the work that was continuing on the SAR. The Chair thanked Steve Cutler for his presentation.

[The following item was taken out of sequence to enable members of the College Management Team to be present during the presentation of the Draft Self-Assessment Report. Amanda Bache left the meeting at this point.]

**7 Appointment of College Bankers**

- 7.1 Steve Cutler reported that in accordance with the Financial Regulations the College had gone out to tender for its banking services and bids had been received from HSBC (the current incumbent), Lloyds TSB (the College's funder for the Art & Design Centre) and Barclays. Santander and Nat West had declined to bid. He explained the process of reviewing the tenders and the assessment criteria as set out in the Report, including the presentations made by the banks, and summarised the conclusions in terms of the services offered and the associated financial implications. Steve Cutler concluded by saying that Barclays had scored highest in the tender assessment and was also the most cost-effective tender, HSBC having submitted an 'as is' response, and so it was recommended that the College transferred its banking services from HSBC to Barclays.

**The Corporation resolved:**

To approve the appointment of Barclays Bank as the College's Bankers.

[Amanda Bache re-joined the meeting. Kim Babb, Andy Sylvester & Russ Henry joined the meeting for the next agenda item.]

**4 College Self-Assessment Report**

- 4.1 The Principal said that Pauline Hollis, the Director of Quality and Professional Development and responsible for the overall production of the Self-Assessment Report, had been taken ill suddenly so Louise Jones as her line manager had taken-over this role. The draft SAR would be available for review at the Students, Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> October and then submitted to the Corporation for approval.

- 4.2 Elaine Giles and Louise Jones presented an overview of the content of the Self-Assessment Report. Elaine Giles outlined the College's context in terms of the educational, social and economic challenges, and summarised the College's 'offer', highlighting the Fast Forward programme, the pastoral support services, the Job Shop, employer links, progression routes and partners/stakeholders. She said that there was a lot of choice in the Black Country area, which came up low against the national measures for numeracy, health and employment. In response to Governors' questions, she said that the unique selling point for the College was the whole package of solutions plus the support structures. The Principal added that responding to the local community was one of the keys to the College's success.
- 4.3 Louise Jones explained that the final touches were still being made to the content of the SAR. She said that the self-assessed grades under the main headings of Outcomes for Learners, Quality of Provision, Leadership and Management, Capacity to Improve and Overall Effectiveness were all Good. She then presented the grades for each of the individual subject areas in both the Learner Responsive and Employer Responsive categories, together with strengths and areas for improvement. Governors asked concerning the trends in the outcomes, those subject areas that had improved and those where the results had regressed. Louise Jones said that in the Learner Responsive category, Engineering & Manufacturing, ICT and Leisure, Travel & Tourism had improved significantly, whereas Science & Mathematics and History & Philosophy had been disappointing. The Principal said that A-Level and AS-Level results across the College had been below expectation. In the Employer Responsive category, there were Outstanding results in many areas, but overall Apprenticeships needed to be more timely. Governors asked if this situation was happening elsewhere given the job availability difficulties being faced nationally. The Principal said that completion of apprenticeship courses was a challenge because of unemployment levels.
- 4.4 After summarising the key points in the SAR under the Quality of Provision and Leadership & Management sections, Louise Jones concluded her presentation with the Overall Effectiveness area, reporting that there were Good or Outstanding success rates in many subject areas across the curriculum and that Outstanding value was being added for national diplomas. AS-Level results and timely completion of the apprenticeship frameworks were the key areas identified for improvement. The Principal confirmed that specific strategies were in place and that she was determined that the College would deliver better outcomes for students in these areas. Governors advised that it was important to have clear recruitment strategies in terms of ensuring that students were enrolled on the most appropriate courses, and asked if the good practice and outcomes in other areas could be transported. The Principal observed that a major challenge was the jump from GCSE to AS-Level and this was one aspect that was being further assessed in the light of the outcomes. The Chair thanked the Management Team for the presentation and the opportunity to consider the main points in the draft SAR prior to its being submitted formally to the Committee and the Corporation.

## **5 Governors' Strategy Discussion**

- 5.1 The Chair explained that the purpose of this item was for governors to look at the major factors that could impact the strategic direction of the College, under Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal & Environmental headings in a PESTLE analysis, with the aim of prioritising any key factors that might emerge and then feeding them into the annual review of the College's Mission, Educational Character and Strategic Priorities. Governors then divided into three groups and arrived at a number of key themes and drivers under each heading, which were then fed back to the meeting as a whole.

## **6 Governors' Away Day Arrangements**

- 6.1 The Chair said that the outputs from each group discussion would be assessed and prioritised and any major strategic factors brought forward into the Governors' Away Day agenda. The Principal said that this analysis was an important governance activity, the outcome of which would be aligned with the analysis carried out by the College Executive and which would inform the requirements for speakers at the Away Day event.

**The meeting closed at 19:00.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chair**