



GOVERNORS' MEETING

Minutes of the meeting on 7 October 2010

Present: Mr Neil Arlett, Mrs Katarina Blair, Mrs Carol Clapham, Mr Charles Davies, Mr Rob Doran, Mrs Pat Gaze, Dr Jonathan Godfrey, Dr Ken Hopkins (Chair), Mr Tony Leach, Mr James Miller, Mr Patrick Morgan, Mrs Helen Powers, Mr John Pratt, Mr Ravi Tandon, (14)

In attendance: Dr Ruth Brinton and Mr Peter Cooper (Deputy Principals), Mr Philip Eyles (Clerk), Mrs Ruth Jones (Finance Director)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Michelle Balcombe, Heidi Macdougall, Andrew McDonagh, Christine Wright (4)

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS AND GIFTS

None

3. NOMINATION OF NEIL ARLETT FOR A FURTHER TERM AS AN INDEPENDENT GOVERNOR

The Chairman of the Search Committee gave a verbal report on the Committee meeting earlier in the day. The Committee had valued Neil Arlett's skills and had nominated him for re-appointment. After brief discussion, the Board of Governors then **AGREED TO RE-APPOINT** Neil Arlett for a four-year term of office as an Independent Governor

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JULY 2010

The Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record and signed.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

In Minute 12iii, reference had been made to the increased risk under the Coalition Government that another partner school might apply to have a sixth form. This has not happened; one school has applied to be an academy, but that school already has a sixth form

6. CLERK'S REPORT

There are two vacancies on the Board. Elections to nominate a Student Governor will be held later this term. The other vacancy is for an Independent Governor – see Minute 12ii

7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The first part of the report dealt with College issues: enrolments (up 73 compared with the target number for November 1st), raw and 'value-added' examination results, league tables, finance and events for Governors in the College calendar.

However, most of the report was about national issues, beginning with funding cuts that are likely to be severe for future years and pay negotiations. There was considerable discussion of the latter. It is clear that this year's round of negotiations will be difficult because teachers in schools are to receive a 2.5% rise (part of a three-year pay deal) for which sixth form colleges have not been funded and cannot afford. Ideally, the Board would wish College teachers to be paid on the same basis as school teachers, and would also wish support staff to receive the same percentage rise as teachers, but this may not be achievable this year. The position will be reconsidered in December.

The new Government has instigated reviews of Ofsted, Music Education and vocational education and has also made some changes to the role of the Local Authority in 16-19 education. The Local Authority retains its commissioning/decommissioning role, because it still has to ensure that enough suitable education and training is available, but funding to colleges will now be paid directly by central government

8. GOVERNORS' SKILLS AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

It was agreed that the Clerk will conduct a survey of Governors' views of their skills and training needs. This will be considered by the Staff & Students Committee in January, with a view to addressing training needs at the Governors' Conference in March

9. GOVERNORS' HANDBOOK

The handbook was distributed and Governors were shown the new section on Staff Well-being

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

i. Staff and Students' Committee on 22 September

The Committee had considered the appraisal of senior post holders, national pay negotiations [with the same views expressed as in Minute 7 above] and staff absence. The absence rate is better than last year's staff absence rate and better than the average for the education sector. There was also considerable discussion of the Quality and Diversity Policy updates and the way the College promotes equality to students under the Fair Treatment heading. A new Well-being theme is used to cover both Fair Treatment and the need for students to 'Stay safe'

Following the Committee's recommendations, the Board of Governors then **AGREED TO ADOPT**

- revised College Policy Procedures for Equality and Diversity
- a new general rule, to be added to the formal Governance Procedures, as follows: "The arrangements for the annual appraisal of senior post holders are that the Principal will appraise the Deputy Principals, and the Chair of Governors and the Chair of the Staff and Students Committee will appraise both the Principal and the Clerk, unless determined otherwise by the Board for a particular year"

The Board also confirmed that this new general rule will be followed this year. The Committee's Minutes were then considered and **APPROVED** as a correct record

ii. Search Committee on 22 September

The Committee began by reviewing the skills needed for new co-opted non-governor committee members and for new governors. As identified at the Committee's 27 May meeting, one important need was to replace the special skills of former Governor and Chartered Accountant Denis Holly on the Audit Committee. General financial skills, common sense and a strong interest in education were also sought in any new appointment.

The Committee then considered the CVs of three prospective committee members, two of whom hope to join the Board eventually. Having considered these in relation to the skills needed by the Board, the Committee nominated all three as non-governor committee members. Following a brief discussion the Board of Governors **AGREED TO ADOPT** the recommendation that

- Martin Churchward joins the Staff & Students Committee
- Blair Priday joins the Finance & Premises Committee
- Chris Hodson joins the Audit Committee

The Committee had then considered whether Martin Churchward or Blair Priday should be nominated for the Board membership vacancy but decided that it would be better to observe them in action on committees in the first instance

The Committee had also considered questions raised by the Governor Recruitment Strategies Booklet that had been produced by the Learning & Skills Improvement Service. Four conclusions were reached:

- Current procedures ensure that there is no need to examine governor performance in relation to the number of terms served
- The Board is diverse in its gender and racial balance
- More work should be done to promote the work of Governors within the College
- 'buddies' or 'mentors' should be appointed to help new Board members

After discussion, the Board **AGREED WITH THESE CONCLUSIONS** and recognised that the last two need to be developed in order to further the Board's effectiveness.

Finally, the Board **APPROVED** the Committee's recommendation that no changes be made to its Terms of Reference and the Committee's Minutes were **APPROVED** as a correct record

iii. Audit Committee on 28 September

The Chair of the Committee summarised the Committee's report

- Internal Audit Annual Report: the College has *adequate and effective* risk management, control and governance processes
- External Audit Strategy (plan) will audit the accounts for the year to 31 July 2010 for the same cost as last year and on a basis agreed with the Finance Director
- Governance Self-assessment should use the same process as in 2009
- Governors' attendance is good – averaging 78%, with 80% on committees

He then went through the Committee's Annual Report to the Board, reminding members of all the year's audit opinions, and the Committee's review of other issues

After brief discussion, the Board of Governors **AGREED TO APPROVE**

- the Internal Report of the Internal Audit Service for 2009-10
- the External Audit Strategy for the accounts to 31.7.10
- that the Governance Self-assessment be prepared in the same way as in 2009
- the Annual Report of the Audit Committee to the Board

The Committee's Minutes were then considered and **APPROVED** as a correct record

iv. Curriculum Committee on 28 September

Most of the Committee's time and its report dealt with the summer examination results, mainly through 'value-added' analyses. The A-Level results were 'very good' and the AS results were 'good', but the Committee also heard that the College has identified some areas for improvement. More work will be done on ways to help able students achieve A* grades and strategies will be developed to deal with boys' underperformance compared with girls, which is more marked this year. However, some boys did exceptionally well: all four of the students who gained six A/A* grades at A-Level were boys

The Committee also discussed enrolment (for which see Minute 7 above) and the Curriculum and Course Masterfile where no changes were recommended

Having considered the Committee's report, the Board **APPROVED** the proposal that no changes should be made to the Course Masterfile

The Committee's Minutes were then considered and **APPROVED** as a correct record

v. Finance & Premises Committee on 30 September

The main business of the Committee had been to consider a revised Financial Forecast and Budget, and to examine the Monthly Management Accounts for June and July. The budget for 2010-11 includes the funds provided for severely disabled students and the associated spending on extra support staff. It also includes an adjustment for FRS17, which relates to provision for the deficit in the pension fund of support staff. Pay inflation is estimated as 1% in the budget. The Board discussed the Financial Forecast and Budget, especially the increasing provision for the pensions' deficit.

There was a brief discussion of the Management Accounts. It was pointed out that the accounts give only a general indication of the year-end position, since there are many adjustments that will be made before the year-end accounts can be finalised. Nevertheless, it was clear that the College ended the financial year with a good surplus.

The Committee had also considered insurance renewal (without terrorism insurance), the new Business Studies Building and the all-weather multi-sports pitch. These were also discussed by the Board.

The Board of Governors then **AGREED TO APPROVE**

- The Budget 2010-11 (final)
- The updated Financial Forecast 2010-11 to 2014-15
- The Monthly Management Accounts for June and July 2010

The Committee's Minutes were then considered and an error pointed out in minute 5. In the third paragraph, the sentence 'It is assumed that there will be annual *spending costs* of 3% over the period to 2015, and also that there will be no cost of living increases after 2010' should have been written 'It is assumed that there will be annual *funding cuts* of 3% over the period to 2015, and also that there will be no cost of living increases after 2010'. The italics have been added in this minute to make the error clear. Subject to this amendment, the Committee's Minutes were **APPROVED** as a correct record

vi. Search Committee on 7 October

See Minute 3 above for the verbal report on this meeting. A written report will be made to the 16 December Board Meeting

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The College staff were thanked for their part in achieving the good summer examination results

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7.30pm on Thursday 16 December in the Meetings Room