

BRACKNELL AND WOKINGHAM COLLEGE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporation Wednesday 14 July 2010 held in the Church Road Conference Room from 0830 hrs – 1015 hrs

Present:

Rev N Parish (Chair)
Ms H. Barnett
Ms J Colbourne
Mr R Cops
Mr S Diegan
Mr M Dudson
Ms J Gay
Ms. L. Holdway
Mr H O’Keeffe (Principal)
Ms L Klassen-Brown
Mr M Lovett
Mr D Passby
Dr D Stirling
Mr P Wagstaff

In Attendance:

Ms. S Ford (Director of Human Resources)
Mr F Perry (Deputy Principal – Resources)
Mr J Taylor (Director of Quality & Standards)
Mr C Williams (Clerk)
Mr M Williams (Director of Information Services)

Apologies:

Ms D Hayes, Ms J Hughes, Dr N Jorgensen, Mr A Stevens

Corporation Member Training & Development

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, as part of the Corporation Member Development Programme, Ms Sue Ford, Director of Human Resources, gave a presentation on the workings of the Freedom of Information Act as it applied to the College. The auditors encouraged the College to be proactive and the College’s policy and procedures were posted on the College’s website.

Requests had to be handled promptly and so there was a need for staff to be aware of College policy and procedures, particularly reception staff as where there were requests they often started at the reception desk. Ms Patricia Wright was the contact point for requests, though the Director of Information Services stated that a number ended up with him. The overall totals were very low: Mr Williams stated that he had dealt with just three requests in the previous year, two of which had been for procurement.

Corporation Members were apprised of the inter-relationship between the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act and the Data Protection Act. Personal data could not be released without the agreement of the person to whom it related, unless it was in the public interest so to do under the FoI Act. However, there were differences – up to £10 could be charged for Data Information requests, but only copying charges for FoI requests. In the case of schools, parents could demand release of personal data relating to their children but parents of college students could only obtain it with the student's agreement. In addition, the police was not entitled to any information, unless they had a warrant or court order.

Ms Ford was thanked for her very interesting and informative presentation.

24/10 – Apologies

Mr Stevens had sent his apologies as he was in hospital.

Resolved:

That the Clerk writes on behalf of the Corporation wishing Mr Stevens a speedy recovery to full health.

25/10 – Declarations of Interest

No new Declarations of Interest were made.

26/10 - Membership

The terms of appointment of Ms Helen Barnett, Mr Malcolm Dudson and Mr Anthony Stevens had come to an end but all three Corporation Members had expressed a wish to serve another term, if that were the Corporation's wish.

In the case of Mr Dudson, the Clerk stated that he had completed two terms and would normally be expected to stand down unless the Corporation thought there were compelling reasons to offer a third term. The Clerk suggested that compelling grounds did exist given that Mr Dudson chaired the Resources Committee, and the College, along with every other college, was having to cope with severe cuts in expenditure as the coalition government sought to drive down the deficit. This was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That Mrs Helen Barnett; Mr Malcolm Dudson and Mr Anthony Stevens be reappointed to serve another term with immediate effect, recognising in the case of Mr Dudson that there were good and sufficient reasons to offer him a third term.
- (2) That the Corporation membership for 2010-2011 be noted.
- (3) That the composition of committees proposed for 2010-2011 be approved.

27/10 – Minutes of Corporation Meeting held on 17 March 2010

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporation were approved and signed by the Chair.

28/10 – Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 22 June 2010

The Minutes were presented by Mr Wagstaff. On Minute 16/10 the Committee had agreed with Mr David Evans, the Project Manager that it was not in the College's best interests to conclude a speedy settlement of the claims that the contractors had mentioned but had not as yet formally submitted.

On Minute 18/10, the Committee had agreed 29 audit days' work as per budget and there was a recommendation to approve the Annual Plan for 2010-2011.

There was also a recommendation in Minute 19/10 to approve the revised Risk Management Policy. This formed a separate item on the Agenda.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Minutes of the Audit Committee be received.
- (2) That the Annual Plan for 2010-2011 be approved.

29/10 – Minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee Meeting held on 23 June 2010

The Minutes were presented by Dr Stirling. He drew attention to Minute 17/10, and pending changes to the inspection regime. In future the emphasis would be on learning rather than teaching.

The Questionnaire was recommended for approval (Minute 24/10) and he also drew attention to Minute 22/10 and the reasons for the ending of the hitherto very successful Level 2 electricians' course.

Regarding Minute 18/10 (Staff Survey Results), Mr Cops suggested that a more positive approach would be needed to sell the survey to staff. Mrs Klassen-Brown suggested that staff did not participate if they could see no benefit. Publicising the results might help. The Director of Quality and Standards replied that this year the survey had been sent out with the newsletter at the suggestion of the staff. Previously it had gone in with the payslip. The results were published but it sounded as though some staff were not reading the newsletter, which raised other issues as management saw the newsletter as an important method of communication. He thanked Corporation Members for their comments, which would be considered when the subject was further discussed.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee be received.

30/10 – Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 29 June 2010

The Minutes were presented by Mr Dudson. The Monitoring Report had been deferred to later in the meeting, as it formed part of the budget deliberations.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Resources Committee be received.

31/10 – Minutes of the Academic Board Meeting held on 7 June 2010

The Principal stated that the minutes were self-explanatory and there were no matters he felt needed to be brought to the attention of the Corporation.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Academic Board be received.

32/10 – Mission Statement

The Principal stated that at the last College inspection, the college inspectors had advised that the College's Mission Statement should be approved by full Corporation on an annual basis. There were no changes to the statement approved at the last Corporation Members' Development Day.

The Chair queried whether the College vision of providing a wide range of opportunities for all was still applicable but the Principal replied that it remained an aspiration.

Resolved:

That the College and Corporation Mission Statement be approved.

33/10 – Self-Assessment

The Clerk asked Corporation Members to complete and return the Questionnaires that had been circulated with the Agenda. He would then analyse the returns and report back.

Resolved:

That the Questionnaires be completed as requested

34/10 – Risk Management Policy

The Policy had been considered in detail by all three Committees including the Audit Committee, who recommended that it be approved (Minute 19/10).

Committees had requested a number of changes, which with one omission had been incorporated in the schedule:

Audit Committee

- Scoring in relation to failing financial health/failing to maintain financial viability and failure to achieve income targets to be increased in light of the current recession.
- Cost escalation on the capital project to be scored more highly in light of the additional demands from the building contractor.

Resources Committee

- Most of the high risks rose around funding issues, and in view of the cutbacks in funding these would need to be scored more highly.
- Under Human Resources, taking recent developments into account, the medium score for stress-related issues to be increased.
- The College's staffing age profile meant that the College was vulnerable in this area (to be added as a separate risk to the schedule).

Curriculum & Quality Committee

- The risk of inadequate funding/adverse changes to funding and failure to generate self-supporting courses had risen.
- Under Student Support, the inability of students to meet the cost of the course appeared a medium risk.

Mr Dudson asked if there was a fire risk but was assured that the College held frequent fire drills.

Resolved:

That the Risk Management Policy, incorporating the above changes, be approved.

35/10 – Individual Roles for Corporation Members

The Principal asked for it to be recorded that Dr David Stirling had volunteered to become the nominated Corporation Member for safeguarding issues and Ms Janet Hughes the nominated Corporation Member for Equality and Diversity issues.

Resolved:

That Dr Stirling and Mrs Hughes be confirmed as the nominated Corporation Members for Safeguarding and Equality and Diversity issues respectively.

36/10 – Corporation Calendar

Resolved: That Committees/Corporation be held on the following dates:

- Autumn term 2010: Term starts: Monday 13 September
Half-term: w/c Monday 25 October
Term ends: Monday 20 December
Xmas holiday: Tuesday 21 Dec – Monday 3 Jan
Audit – Wednesday 24 November
C&Q – Thursday 4 November

Resources – Thursday 11 November
Corporation – Wednesday 8 December

- Spring Term 2010: Term starts: Tuesday 4 January
Half-term: w/c Monday 21 February
Term ends: Monday 11 April
Easter holiday: Tuesday 12 – 25 April
Audit – Tuesday 1 March
C&Q – Wednesday 16 February
Resources - Thursday 3 March
Corporation - Wednesday 16 March
- Summer term 2010: Term starts: Tuesday 26 April
Half-term: w/c Monday 30 May
Term ends: Friday 8 July
Audit – Tuesday 21 June
C&Q – Wednesday 22 June
Resources (followed by Remuneration) Tuesday 28 June
Corporation – Wednesday 13 July

All meetings (other than Remuneration) to be at 0830 hrs.

37/10 – Budget Monitoring Report to 31 May 2010

The Report was introduced by the Deputy Principal (Resources). It had been considered by Resources Committee and at the Committee's request a separate paper on cash flow had been circulated with the agenda.

Resolved:

That the Report be received.

38/10 – Principal's Report

The Principal stated that the College was in something of a “phoney war” situation. Cuts of as high as 40% were being talked about for some parts of the public sector but as yet no specific statements had been made as regards the FE sector. The rules restricting virement of monies between different spending heads had been relaxed. Strong pressure had been exerted by ministers to have a pay freeze and although they could not command, he believed that most colleges would be freezing pay. Staff appeared to accept that this was a necessary step and was acceptable if it would save jobs.

The building project was now complete and in the snagging phase. Heating and ventilation was still the most pressing issue. The Wick Hill project was proceeding and when it came to fruition, Eastern Road would close and the College would have completed its accommodation strategy.

The College was still having to deal with two separate departments for its funding issues. The Principal knew Mr Willetts personally, one of the two Secretaries of State – the other being Dr Vince Cable. Mr Willetts' deputy, Mr Hayes, was on the right of the party but was also a supporter of lifelong learning, which was encouraging.

Resolved:

That the Principal's Report be received.

39/10 – Respect Agenda

The Principal stated that the Respect Agenda would be re-invigorated. Its profile had dropped while the College's attention was concentrated on the move to the new College and it had not helped that in the early days the contractors had discouraged advertising material on the walls, while they were drying.

The Equality and Diversity Committee was being resurrected and Mrs Janet Hughes would be invited as the Corporation's nominated Corporation Member for equality and diversity issues.

For Information

40/10 – Staff Liaison Committee Report

The Report was given by Ms Jan Gay, one of the Staff Corporation Members.

Staff were pleased with the new building but as mentioned by the Principal, heating and ventilation issues were still causing problems, although the position had improved in the last fortnight. The roof space was to be brought into use, and two staff coaches had been appointed. Ms Gay thanked those Corporation Members who had attended meetings with the staff or who had sat in on lessons. Corporation Members' interest was very much appreciated.

Resolved:

That Ms Gay's report be received.

41/10 – Student Travel 2010-11

The Principal reported that the bus pass scheme was working well. Students paid £90 a year or £30 a term and could use any First Bus services at the child fare rate. Bracknell Borough Council had underwritten the scheme in 2009-2010, but were now withdrawing. The scheme would continue.

For Information

42/10 – Achiever Awards Ceremony

The Principal announced that the 2010 Achiever Awards Ceremony would take place in December and, as in previous years, **the College is actively seeking sponsorship.** Corporation Members were encouraged to assist with finding sponsorship for this event if at all possible.

For Information

43/10 – Official Opening – Wednesday 29 September 2010

The Principal stated that the opening ceremony had been fixed for midday on Wednesday 29 September. A further announcement would be made once outstanding details had been tied up.

For Information

CW/JHOK/BPW120810