

Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporation held on Thursday 16 September 2010 at 5:30pm in the Board Room

Present: Damian McSweeney (Chair); Paul Pharaoh; Les Agnew (until Minute No. 66/10); Norma Boyes; Mike Davidson; Sarah Graham; John Lackie; Joe Holliday; Jill Killen; Andrew Oldham; Cath Richardson (Principal); Mark Stanger; Robin Talbot; Rick Wylie

Apology: Michael Doyle; Jane Murray (Clerk to Governors)

Also present: Karen Wilson, Deputy Principal Finance and Corporate Services; Chris Nattress, Deputy Principal, Quality, Curriculum & Partnerships; Joan Bayliff, HR Manager, Jennifer Foote, temporary Clerk to the Governors

As this was Joan Bayliff's first Corporation Board meeting, introductions took place around the table.

57/10 Appointment of Temporary Clerk

Jennifer Foote was appointed as Clerk for the duration of the meeting. Governors congratulated her on the completion of her LLB(Hons) degree.

58/10 Urgent Item

The Board was requested to consider an item on the appointment of a new governor submitted as urgent in that consideration thereof could not reasonably be delayed until the next ordinary meeting. It was agreed to consider the report at the same time as the consideration of the minutes of the Search and Governance Committee.

59/10 Chair's Address

The Chair welcomed governors to the first meeting of the new academic year and gave a short powerpoint presentation to governors on college governance. It was hoped that the restructured meeting framework would allow for strategic debate and focus on critical issues and that all governors would contribute to constructive challenge and discussion. The Chair indicated that he would welcome feedback from governors on how meetings had progressed.

60/10 Agenda Re-Order

A number of confidential items had been included on the agenda and as staff governors and members of staff in attendance would need to leave for some or all of these items it was agreed to consider Items 2b, 6b, 17 and 18 following completion of the public items of business.

61/10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 1 July were approved and signed as a correct record. Consideration of the minutes of the special meeting of 29 July was deferred until the next Corporation Board as they had not been circulated with the agenda papers. It was also agreed that the reference to attendance in the minutes by agenda item number was unclear. It was agreed that future reference to any variation in attendance within a meeting should be made according to the minute numbers a governor was present for.

62/10 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received. However, Mike Davidson informed the Board that, as a councillor at Allerdale Borough Council he had a prejudicial interest in matters relating to the outsourcing of the Carnegie Theatre and therefore would tender his resignation from the Board at the end of the meeting. The Board thanked Mike for his hard work and commitment during his tenure as a governor of the college. It was agreed that the Clerk would write a formal letter of thanks to Cllr Davidson on behalf of the Board.

63/10 Resources Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Resources Committee held on 17 June were received. As this was the last meeting of this Committee it was agreed that the minutes should be approved by those members of the Corporation there present and signed by the Corporation Chair as a correct record. This was subject to the amendment at Minute No 13/10 where the reference to FRS17 adjustments was altered to read "could" instead of "would".

64/10 Learning Experience Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Learning Experience Committee held on 8 June were received. As this was the last meeting of this Committee it was agreed that the minutes should be approved by those members of the Corporation there present and signed by the Corporation Chair as a correct record.

At Minute No. 20/10 the Board queried the reference to student perception of inconsistencies in staff expectations. The Board was informed that guidance had been issued on good conduct and behaviour and that a consistent message was delivered by staff.

65/10 Key Performance Indicators

The key performance indicators (KPIs) were received and noted. Governors were informed that the outturn report would be produced as an appendix to the self assessment report. An update was given on those indicators evidencing a downward trend or a target not reached. It was accepted that a number of external factors such as the floods of November 2009 and the current economic climate had impacted adversely on the achievement of some targets.

In respect of the low response rate to the staff questionnaire governors queried how staff issues would be picked up by management. Discussions were being facilitated between Heads of Faculty and college teams in order to improve communication.

In respect of the below target improvement in success rates for apprentices governors queried what action the college was taking to address the situation. It was confirmed that problems had been encountered in sourcing placements for learners on 16-18 apprenticeship programmes. The college was exploring a number of different methods to overcome this. The college was also working with Cumbria County Council to develop a public sector apprentice scheme to be delivered throughout the county. It was agreed that this issue should be considered further and in more detail at the November meeting.

The Deputy Principal Finance and Resources explained that it was intended to reduce the number of KPIs in the report for 2010/11 whilst retaining the option to request additional KPIs if necessary.

One governor expressed concern that the indicators as stated gave no real feel for the performance of the college and that targets in future should be smarter. He agreed to meet with the Deputy Principal Finance and Resources to discuss the issue.

66/10 Complaints' Yearly Report

The Board received the report of the Deputy Principal Quality, Curriculum and Partnerships giving an overview of performance in resolving complaints in 2009/10. The Board also, for the first time, received details of recorded compliments for the same period. Governors noted the lack of detail as to what the complaints involved. This information had previously been submitted to the Learning Experience Committee and would be included as part of future reports to Corporation Board. In respect of performance indicators it was suggested that the college should be noting whether the complaint had been addressed as opposed to resolved within a certain timescale. 47 complaints were received up to 4 August and all had been resolved. Of these, 17 had not met performance indicators. This was a marked decrease from the numbers of complaints received for the previous year (68).

In respect of compliments it was noted that a number referred to one specific member of staff.

Les Agnew left the meeting

67/10 Human Resources Yearly Report

The Board received the annual report on HR issues. This report had formally been submitted to the Finance and Resources Committee on a termly basis. The report contained details on

- Learning and development
- Staffing establishment
- College structure
- Remuneration
- Staff productivity
- Sickness absence
- Family friendly strategies
- College procedures
- Staff surveys
- The reward and recognition strategy
- Health and well being strategy
- Collaborative working
- HR services

In respect of sickness absence the Board was pleased to note the reduction in trend but queried whether any benchmark data existed for the purposes of comparison. It was explained that the relevant AoC data was not yet available.

Governors were mindful of the fact that an employee reporting for work even though clearly unwell could have an adverse impact on the business of the college. It was confirmed that such situations were closely monitored by line managers and that employees who were clearly unfit to work were sent home.

The Board asked whether the college reward and recognition scheme could be widened. It was explained that the scheme had been reviewed two years ago and it was considered that the current levels were appropriate.

In respect of staffing levels the Board was informed that, following a management review in the summer, the college had introduced a number of proactive strategies to reduce staffing budget costs. It was confirmed that this had been achieved without recourse to compulsory redundancies.

68/10 Pay Award

The Board was informed that, following negotiations between the AoC and the relevant trade unions, the final offer recommended to colleges by the AoC for the pay award for 2010/11 was 0.2% or £50 whichever was the greater from 1 August 2010. At the time of the meeting it was confirmed that the UCU locally had asked to consult its members.

It was confirmed that the AoC recommendation was affordable and that the college would be free to implement the award without awaiting trade union agreement. As detailed in the accompanying report, some consideration had been given to some enhancement of the national pay award, however it was felt that this couldn't be given in the current financial climate, but may become worthy of consideration later in the year.

Resolved - that the pay award for 2010/11 be approved as 0.2% or £50 whichever is the greater and paid with effect from 1 August 2010.

69/10 Safeguarding Yearly Report

The Board received the yearly review of safeguarding activity for 2009/10. The report gave details of the set up of the Safeguarding Team in college and the reporting framework which ensured that incidents were reported to the appropriate external agency. Training and development on safeguarding had been undertaken with both staff and learners. The college was working with Wigan and Knowlsey colleges on best practice. Governors were informed that 18 safeguarding incidents had been reported since February 2010 together with five additional incidents since the start of the new academic year. In response to a query it was confirmed that the range and pattern of incidents was broadly within expectation. Governors requested to receive a report if any particular category of incident evidenced a marked increase in occurrence.

70/10 Health & Safety Yearly Report

The Board received the annual report on Health and Safety. Accident information for 2009/10 was submitted. It was noted that only one RIDDOR reportable accident occurred during the year and that the total number of accidents for staff, students and visitors was down on the comparable period for 2008/09. It was also noted that, in respect of the insurance claim detailed in the report, the wording should read "no payments and no liability attached."

71/10 Equality and Diversity Yearly Report

The Board received the annual review of the work of the equality and diversity team in college. Governors were informed that equality and diversity was now a limiting grade within the inspection framework. Governors discussed the demographics of West Cumbria which had very little ethnic diversity. It was agreed that socio-economic indicators would prove a more tangible indicator for any achievement gaps which needed to be addressed by the college.

72/10 Policy, Funding and Collaboration Update

The Board received the verbal report of the Deputy Principal, Finance and Corporate Services as follows:

Capital Project Funding

The college had secured a grant from the LEA of £1m for the provision of a centre with the focus of vocational training for learners with special needs. Additional grant funding from the Skills Funding Agency of £500,000 had been declined, however £225,000 had been received under the Enhanced Renewal Grant Scheme. It was anticipated that the building would be completed by September 2011. Regular updates on the progress of the project would be submitted to the Board. The Board queried whether there would be any disruption to learners as a result of building work. It was explained that the centre would be situated on the edge of the current site and would not therefore impact on delivery of provision. The Board received assurance that the project would be designed to match the funding available. It was not expected that the college would contribute of its own other than possibly for equipment for the completed centre. The Board was mindful of the implications for the colleges who had been promised funding by the LSC prior to the collapse of its Capital Build scheme. However, the college did not anticipate the same risks with the SFA funding.

Shared Services

Governors were informed of a potential bid to develop shared services as an extension to the current collaborative arrangements between the Cumbria colleges. A further update would be given at the October Meeting.

Education White Paper

The Principal gave details of current national proposals in respect of skills for growth. No indication that the college was nearing inspection had been received.

73/10 Seal – Annual Report

The annual report on the use of the college seal was submitted for consideration. The seal had been used three times during 2009/10. In respect of a query regarding the lease of office space in Keswick the Principal explained that the college has a presence in a number of locations such as Wigton, Maryport and Whitehaven as outreach centres.

74/10 Governance Administration

The Board received the report of the Clerk detailing an amendment to the meeting schedule for 2010/11. The November meeting of the Search Committee and Board would now take place on 23 November to allow the BBC to use the college as a venue for the "Question Time" programme on 25 November.

Governors also received the final committee/ role allocation for 2010/11 as agreed at a previous meeting.

75/10 Confidential Items

Resolved – that the meeting move into confidential session for discussion of items of senior staff items and issues where staff or individuals might be identified.

Staff governor Sarah Graham withdrew. Cath Richardson, Karen Wilson, Chris Nattress and Joan Bayliff left the meeting.

76a Minutes

The minutes of a meeting held on 1 July 2010 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

77a Learner Experience Minutes

The confidential minute of the Learning Experience Committee held on 8 June was received. As this was the last meeting of this Committee it was agreed that the minute should be approved by those members of the Corporation there present and signed by the Corporation Chair as a correct record, subject to the removal of the word “that” from the penultimate line of the fourth paragraph.

78a Search and Governance Minutes

The minutes were noted. The urgent extra item was considered and it was

Resolved – that Tom Ryan be appointed to the Board from 1 October 2010 – 31 December 2013.

Cath Richardson and Karen Wilson returned to the meeting.

79a Staffing issue

A staffing matter was discussed.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm.