

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation – Lakes College, West Cumbria

Held on Thursday, 17 December 2009 at 4.30 pm in the Boardroom of the College

Present: Damian McSweeney (Chair), Paul Pharaoh, Norma Boyes; Steve Bradley; Joe Holliday; John Lackie, Cath Richardson (Principal) (Items 1-22); Andrew Oldham ; Michael Doyle (Items 1-22), Jill Killen; Mark Stanger; Mike Davidson; Susie Shepherd (Items 5-23); Clare Walker (Items 5-22)

Apologies: Adrian Taylor; Dan Carter

In Attendance: Karen Wilson, Deputy Principal Finance and Corporate Services (Items 1-22); Chris Nattress, Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality (Items 1-22); Jane Murray, Clerk to the Governors (Items 1-23a)

Also present: Sarah Graham, Observer (Items 5-22)

77/09 Declarations of Interest

None received

78/09 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September were agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment at 68/09:

“The team, from the Quality Assurance Agency, is responsible for assessing Higher Education Provision.”

79/09 Board Membership Appointments

The Chair of the Search and Governance Committee informed Governors that two nominations had been received from the University of Cumbria (U of C) and from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). Dr Robin Talbot (U of C), would bring expertise in health and social care, while Rick Wylie (UCLan), would bring expertise in the nuclear industry and governance. Their appointment would strengthen the existing skills base and assist both academic and regeneration partnership working.

The vacancy for a non-teaching staff governor had been advertised and was uncontested with only one nomination having been received. Sarah Graham already undertook voluntary community work and was expected to make a lively contribution.

At the time of appointment, Andrew Oldham's appointment had been for three rather than four years. It was sought to amend the appointment to four years to ensure consistency.

Resolved –

- 1) That Dr Robin Talbot, University of Cumbria, be appointed to the Board effective from 1st January 2010, term of office expiring December 2013.
- 2) That Rick Wylie, University of Central Lancashire be appointed to the Board effective from 1st January 2010, term of office expiring December 2013.
- 3) That Sarah Graham be appointed to the Board, effective from 1st January 2010, term of office expiring December 2013.
- 4) That Andrew Oldham's appointment be extended to December 2012.

80/09 Results 2008-09

The Deputy Principal, Curriculum & Quality, presented the draft results. He explained, however, that while these were presented in good faith, only that day all results on the centrally-held Learning and Skills Council database had been changed and explanations were awaited by all colleges.

Subject to that caveat, there was sustained improvement in success rates for long and short courses, well above the national average. There was traditionally a high success rate for very short courses and so it was notoriously difficult to break the barrier, but at 94% against the national average of 95%, performance was still good and showed continued improvement.

Headline results LSC Rules applied

		Long	Short	Very Short
Success Rate	85%	81%	88%	94%
Starts	3938	2388	682	868
Achieved	3343	1928	602	813
National Average	78%	74%	83%	95%
90th. percentile	84%	79%	90%	98%

Success rates for long qualifications are significantly above the national average by 7% putting these results in the top 10% of colleges. 16-18 performance is 6% above the national average whereas 19+ provision is 7% above the national average. Success rates on short courses are also above the national average.

The three-year trend demonstrating sustained improvement is as follows:

All Levels	16-18			19+			All Learners		
	06/07	07/08	08/09	06/07	07/08	08/09	06/07	07/08	08/09
Retention	88	91	90	88	92	91	88	92	91
Achievement	91	89	92	92	92	96	92	91	94
Success	80	82	83	81	86	87	81	83	85

Worthy of note were the outstanding achievements on social inclusion. Governors were reminded that 50% of full-time students arrived at the college at entry level/level 1, and results showed very high achievement from socially excluded areas.

In need of improvement were retention and achievement rates at Level 2. It was hoped that the development of a software system, which would allow real-time monitoring of student performance, would help performance in this area.

Success rates for key core skills were as follows:

Headline results - Key Skills

Year	College Success Rate	National Average
2006/07	66%	49%
2007/08	76%	56%
2008/09	70%	TBC

It was acknowledged through questioning that the rate for 2007/08 might well have been an anomaly.

Success rates for the Train 2 Gain contract were 91% against a national average of 79%.

The consensus of the Board was that the results were extremely good and that staff should be congratulated on their achievements.

Resolved – to note the results.

81/09 Self-Assessment Report

Continuing to consider the overall self-assessment report, Governors noted the overall grading of good. The key to self-assessment was the need to consider whether performance was both consistent and sustainable.

Capacity to improve had been graded as 1; Outcomes for Learners grade 2; Quality of Provision Grade 2 and Leadership and Management Grade 1.

All of the curriculum areas were showing 'good' or 'outstanding' with the exception of construction, where, as Governors were aware, there was the greatest pressure on accommodation.

Governors were particularly pleased to note the improvement of Information and Communication Technology. Areas for improvement were highlighted in the report.

It was questioned why the overall 'Outcomes for Learners' was graded as 2, when the majority of contributing grades were grade 1, and the Deputy Principal reminded Governors of the improvements which were needed to retention and achievement rates at level 2, which had influenced the decision, and the need to demonstrate sustainability at that level.

Governors again recognised the positive picture.

Resolved – that the draft Self-assessment report be endorsed.

82/09 Three-year Targets

The Principal reminded the Board of the change of Learning and Skills Council (LSC) rules which had impacted on retention rates across the country. In spite of this, the College had performed well and the challenge was to sustain that level of success – there was a lot of work still to do. The targets were ambitious in some areas.

The Principal continued to draw Governors' attention to the impact of the floods on the College. The College had made every effort to accommodate students by providing shuttle minibuses from the station, however there was some concern, of which Governors should be aware, that the transport difficulties may have a negative impact on retention rates and that other students were falling behind with their work. The situation was being closely monitored.

Resolved – to note the impact of the floods and to accept the three-year targets.

83/09 Learner Experience Committee Minutes

The draft minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 10 November 2009 were received and noted by the Board.

84/09 Key Performance Indicators

The Deputy Principal, Finance & Corporate Services, presented the key performance indicators and drew attention to specific areas:

- Equality and Diversity targets were being revised and this was an area, which was monitored closely.
- Attention had already been drawn to the impact of the floods on achievement and success rates.
- Sickness absence had increased owing to winter flu and viruses. Attention had been drawn previously to the higher long-term absences impacting on the college – there had been several instances of cancer. The College had engaged an occupational therapist, who was having a positive impact in getting people back to work.
- Employers and workforce development was now being subject to regular in-year monitoring of activity levels and this was expected to increase across all contracts. Action plans were in place to address the impact of a slow start in some areas.
- 14-19 provision was developing at a great pace and the picture was very positive, with Cumbria County Council asking the College to play a leading role in West Cumbria and good school-college relations.
- Full-time equivalent numbers for Higher Education were down, but within the tolerance levels and no clawback was expected by the Higher Education Funding Council.
- The Deputy Principal felt that the Self-Assessment validation was getting a lot better with gradings subject to peer comparison.

Resolved – to note performance to date.

85/09 Collaboration Board Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cumbria Colleges' Collaboration Board held on Friday, 18 September 2009 were received and noted. The Board continued to work well, however concerns had already been voiced to the Board with respect to the joint company – this would continue to be monitored until existing contracts were completed.

86/09 Financial Statements 2008-09

The Financial Statements, which were subject to extensive consideration by the Audit and Resources Committees, were presented to the Board on the recommendation of those Committees.

Resolved – to approve the financial statements.

87/09 Audit Committee Annual Report, Audit Plan 2009-10, & Audit Committee Minutes

The Board received the Audit Committee Annual Report, a requirement of the Audit Code of Practice, and the Audit Plan for 2009-10. The purpose is to give assurance to the Board, that, as far as they are able, given the information tabled to the Committee, they are confident in the audit process and procedures. The Board also received and noted the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 30 November 2009.

Resolved – to note the report/plan and minutes.

88/09 Financial Management and Control Evaluation

The Financial Management and Control Evaluation return had been approved by the Audit Committee.

It was questioned whether there was confidence in the 'good' governance marking and the Clerk explained that she had been through the graded examples which had been supplied and was confident that this was an accurate reflection of performance based on the guidelines given.

Resolved – to accept the Financial Management and Control Evaluation return.

89/09 Management Accounts and Financial Update

The Deputy Principal Finance & Corporate Services presented the accounts to date, which showed that the College was on track so far to meet budget estimates. Nevertheless, the financial picture was much tighter than in previous years and the climate was worrying.

There was considerably more in-year monitoring of Government contracts to deliver training, which had already seen a £8,000 clawback, and this trend was expected to continue.

In particular, the Deputy Principal drew attention to the need to reduce dependency on LSC income. There was more to do to reach the target, including a review of the Curriculum.

With tighter finances came an even greater need for good planning and she confirmed that the planning process for next year would start in January and culminate in May, as part of the three-year planning process.

Agreed – to note the financial update.

90/09 Whistle-blowing Policy

The Clerk presented the updated Whistle-blowing Policy which had been considered at the Resources Committee meeting. The main change had been a shift of emphasis towards confidentiality, although no guarantees could be given as the nature of the allegation, subsequent line of investigation or resultant disciplinary action might reveal the identity of the person making the allegation.

Resolved – that the Whistle-blowing Policy be approved.

91/09 Resources Committee Minutes

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on Thursday, 26 November 2009 were received and noted.

92/09 Machinery of Government

In presenting an update of the changes taking place as a result of the Machinery of Government legislation, the Principal drew attention to a consultation document on the principles to be adopted, published by the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

It sets out draft principles for the operation of the National Commissioning Framework and includes a summary of the new 16-19 system including policy, and the roles and responsibilities of the major participating organisations. Under the legislation, schools would be required to give impartial advice on options for 16-18 education.

Following consultation, more detailed guidance would be published which would help the College with forward planning. In the interim, the college would continue to lobby hard for resources.

Governors were also reminded that under the legislation, the Learning and Skills Council was to be abolished, with new agencies/responsibilities as follows:

- The Skills Funding Agency (SAF)
- The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)
- The Office of the Qualification and Examination Regulator (Ofqual)
- Commissioning responsibility for 16-19 education and training to move to local authorities.

As a result of the legislation, a significant increase in demand for apprenticeship provision could be anticipated after 2013.

Agreed – to note the changes.

93/09 Energy Coast Campus

Governors were reminded that this was a £10m project financed by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to create an educational campus comprising key education providers and employers at Lillyhall and to provide a cohesive approach to delivery.

Lakes College in particular was focusing on and leading the project for a new construction centre, anticipating further demand in this area with the potential for nuclear new build.

The Strategy and delivery model had been recently reviewed amid concerns of a lack of progress and the draft proposals were attached. There would be a further update to the March meeting.

94/09 Governance Strategy

The Clerk presented the Governance Strategy, which had been drawn together following the self-assessment in July 2009. It had been considered by the Search & Governance Committee and set some principles and priorities for governance, which would influence the work plans, the training plan and reviews of structures and standing orders.

Resolved – to adopt the governance strategy.

95/09 Association of Colleges' Annual Conference

The Principal drew attention to some of the headlines from the Annual Conference. In particular, the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) were making a £240 million 'efficiency gain' which would include

- 3% across the board cut in the adult responsive learning rate
- 3% cut in employer responsive learning rate
- 6% cut in Train to Gain funding rates, reversing the 3% premium added in 2009/2010
- 10% cut in funding rates for 25+ apprenticeships
- A total of £208 million will be spent on three unemployed programmes: Response to Redundancy; 6 Month Offer; 18-24 Young Person's Guarantee
- Reduction in Skills for Life programme weighting from 1.4 to 1.2 (except for target bearing numeracy)
- Removal of all Train to Gain funding for units; 50% funding for repeat level 2s, lower funding for work with large employers

The impact of these changes on the College was as yet unclear, but management team were keeping a close eye on the situation and would keep Governors up-to-date.

The Principal also remarked that discussions during the conference had highlighted just how well the college was performing. The academic success and the teaching and

learning rates were fantastic and she was very proud of staff and the contribution they were making.

Agreed – to note the update.

96/09 Use of Corporation Seal Annual Report

The Annual report was received and noted.

97/09 Search and Governance Minutes

The minutes of the search and Governance Committee meeting held on 24 September 2009 were received and noted.

98/09 Confidential Session

The Chairman moved into confidential session and staff members withdrew.

99/09 Remuneration of the Principal and Senior Postholder

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee informed the Board of the decisions it reached on the pay and conditions of service of the Principal and the Senior Postholder at its meeting of 17 December 2009 as detailed in the confidential minutes of that meeting.

100/09 Remuneration of the Clerk

The Clerk withdrew and the Chair took notes.

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee informed the Board of the decisions it reached on the pay and conditions of service of the Clerk as detailed in the confidential minutes of its meeting on 17 December 2009.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.