

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Corporation held on Thursday, 29 July 2010 in the Boardroom.

Present: Damian McSweeney (Chair); Norma Boyes; Mike Davidson; Sarah Graham; Cath Richardson; Joe Holliday; Les Agnew; Mark Stanger

Apologies: Paul Pharaoh; Dan Carter; Andrew Oldham; John Lackie; Adrian Taylor; Rick Wylie; Robin Talbot; Jill Killin; Michael Doyle

Also present: Karen Wilson, Deputy Principal Finance & Corporate Services, Jane Murray (Clerk to Govs)

54/10 Declarations of Interest

Joe Holliday declared an interest in the project as a Cumbria County Councillor. As Cumbria County Council had already declared their intent to part-fund the project, it was agreed that the interest was not prejudicial.

Mike Davidson declared an interest as Chairman of the Carnegie Theatre, but it was agreed that this was a complementary interest and not a conflict.

55/10 14-19 Centre

The Deputy Principal advised the Board that while a 14-19 Vocational Centre had been the subject of discussion for some time, a letter of intent from Cumbria County Council to fund the project to the tune of £1m had only been received in the past week.

In the first option- a new 14-19 centre adjoining the building – the £1m would be used as match funding for a grant application to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for a further £500k to meet the total build cost of £1.5m. The urgency of the funding application had led to the need for a special meeting to be called.

It was clarified by those present that match funding was on a 2:1 ratio, and that the County Council funding would cover the match funding requirements of the SFA.

The purpose of the vocational centre would be to provide enhanced facilities and curriculum offer for Learners with Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD). As Governors were aware, the College had a good reputation with above average rates for LDD and the approach from Cumbria County Council (CCC) recognised this. The project would

assist CCC to meet its statutory obligations to provide education and training for this learner group up to age 25.

Nevertheless, in designing the centre, care had been taken to ensure a flexible space, which would offer enhanced facilities for all learners, including younger (and more vulnerable) 14-16 learners.

Capita Symonds had been commissioned by Cumbria County Council to provide the cost appraisal for the project, which, following discussion with the college, includes a flexible theatre space in addition to flexible, sensory spaces and fully ICT equipped learning areas.

Were it to prove impossible to externally fund the new vocational centre in its entirety, the second option could be to use the £1m from Cumbria County Council to complement existing facilities, improving facilities for LDD.

It was clarified that the proposed extension would be adjoined to the existing facility and it would be located behind the garage and the nursery to allow access to existing showers for LDD.

The plans drawn up are very broad brush at the moment and the Deputy Principal acknowledged that she would be carefully managing the risk. Any scheme would include considerable contingency. There was no intention of overspend.

The Principal added that she would expect that there may be issues with drainage that had yet to be taken into account.

With the new provision, it was considered that Learner numbers would increase. It was noted that the increase numbers for learners was ambitious.

It was noted that another risk was that the deadlines for both grants was the need to complete any project by August 2011.

Additional costs at worst case scenario (no new learners) would be the energy costs etc which were equivalent in cost to ten new full-time learners, which was considered both low risk and achievable.

The Principal added that the Performing Arts provision was in line with the Energy Coast agenda and would be complementary to existing partnership projects with, for example, the Theatre by the Lakes.

Asked whether the College could still have a new build with £1m, it was felt that this might be possible, but it would be a smaller venue. There was reluctance for the College to provide any of the capital funding as the College's priority would continue to be a new construction centre.

Resolved -

- a) To approve the capital project to construct a new 14-19 Vocational Centre currently estimated at £1,500,000, subject to successful external funding being secured.
- b))That the College submit a capital application for the Vocational Centre to the Skills Funding Agency to apply for the Renewal and Enhanced Renewal Grant for £500,000
- c) That the College apply the £1,000,000 currently pledged by Cumbria County Council towards this project, should the Skills Funding Agency Grant be approved.

56/10 Collaboration Update

Due to national sector recognition of the collaborative procurement approach in Cumbria, the Cumbrian Colleges have been given advance warning of a national £15m funding pot expected in September to explore future opportunities for collaborative and shared services.

The timing was such that it may be a tight turnaround and there may be a need for a further special meeting.

The meeting closed at 1755h