

Minutes of the 131st Meeting of the Board of Corporation of Sunderland College held on Tuesday 5th December 2017 at 6.00 pm in the Conference Room, City Campus

PRESENT: Mr J Barnett, Mr G Blyth, Mr T Crompton, Ms A Fellows, Cllr C Gofton, Mrs A Hodgson, Mr R Lawson (Chair), Mr D Measor, Mr P McEldon, Mr J Parkinson, Mr R Saelzer, Ms E Thinnesen.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr N Harrett, Mr D Howells, Mr M Hughes, Ms V Morton, Mr I Nixon, Ms J Quinn

CLERK: Martin Gershman

Bd/17/105 APOLOGIES AND CONSENT FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received and absence consented to from Mrs E Bass and Mr M Patton. The absence of Mr K Ramanathas was also consented to.

Bd/17/106 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2017

Subject to the minute of item 99 remaining confidential, the minutes of the meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

Bd/17/107 MATTERS ARISING

Bd/17/083: The Chair informed governors that Mrs Shirley Atkinson and Mrs Sue Forster had resigned as governors. He, the Principal and the Clerk had met with June Cramman and Simon Marshall and their appointments as governors would be discussed at the next meeting of the Governance Committee. Cllr Gofton indicated that the Local Authority (LA) would propose the holder of the adult education portfolio as her replacement when she stood down in May.

Bd/17/108 EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Principal presented her report to governors. Some of the issues covered in the report had been discussed at the strategic event on 29th November.

The FE sector was pressing the Government for a new strategic approach to English and maths.

Colleges were central to the implementation of T levels. The DfE had carried out the first national ten week consultation on these and it was pleasing that it had covered the right issues. The first T levels would be at level 3. There would be a compulsory work placement, which was a cause for concern, because of the difficulties involved in organising these in certain areas. The College was involved in the pilot and was helping to drive this forward.

A visit by the Skills Strategy division of the DfE would be taking place the following day as part of the review of higher level technical education.

The replacement for the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Office for Students (OFS) was to be headed up by Nicola Dandridge, formerly CEO of Universities UK. This was supposed to lead to a new architecture for HE in the UK, simplifying the routes into HE, making it easier to obtain degree-awarding powers and promoting social mobility. A risk-based approach to quality assurance was to be adopted and bureaucracy reduced. A governor pointed out that Alan Milburn and the other social mobility commissioners had just resigned because of Government inactivity.

(Redacted)

Mr Nixon and his team were warmly congratulated on the College's success in winning the AoC Beacon award for employer engagement. Mr Crompton and Mr Barnett were thanked for supporting the College by attending the assessment. The College would present the award to the winner next year.

The College's expenditure before income, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) financial health score was expected to improve to 150 and the timing of this was very helpful.

The transition process following on the merger with Hartlepool Sixth Form College (HSFC) continued with the training of the HSFC staff in Sunderland's systems.

The Chair highlighted the student lunch from 1:00 to 2:00 on 15th December and encouraged governors to attend.

(Redacted)

The Board:

i) Received and noted the report

(Redacted)

iv) Noted that the relevant parts of the minute and paper should remain confidential

Bd/17/109 COLLEGE FEES POLICY REVIEW

The report was tabled by Mr Howells. He pointed out that governors had considered fees policy and its impact during 2016/17.

The Board:

i) Received and noted the report

ii) Agreed to set the tuition and related fees policy for 19+ FE and HE provision in line with government and Funding Body policy for 2018/19

iii) Delegated authority to the Resources and Capital Projects Committee to agree the details resulting for Funding Body funded and other relevant provision

iv) Delegated authority to the SLT to waive or amend fees, where this is required due to market forces, or in cases of individual hardship

v) Delegated authority to the SLT to agree appropriate fees for Full Cost and international work, based on market rates

Bd/17/110 SAFEGUARDING MONITORING BI-ANNUAL REPORT

The report, which incorporated HSFC for the first time, was presented by Ms Morton. There had been an increase in the severity of the causes for safeguarding referrals as well as the number. This represented a challenge for the College, but was being managed by increased staffing of this area and training. Specialised training in sexualised behaviour had been provided and each case was reviewed to identify any lessons which could be learned. Bullying had however reduced during 2016/17, hopefully as a result of the work undertaken as part of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The Police Commissioner had made an announcement that morning regarding awareness of online exploitation of children. *A governor asked if the Board should be concerned that 30% of new staff had not yet received basic training.* Ms Morton responded that some staff on maternity leave or on long term sickness absence were still to receive this, but the priority was to provide this to front line staff at HSFC, including cleaners, catering staff and invigilators, where their work pattern had been an issue in the provision of the training. *A governor asked what the College's links were to Northumbria Police's Operation Sanctuary.* She had met with one of the survivors recently who was very young and vulnerable and her experiences were shocking. Ms Morton responded that the College had multiple links to external agencies.

The Board:
i) Received and noted the report

(Mr Measor and Mr Parkinson left the meeting)

Bd/17/111 HUMAN RESOURCES TRI-ANNUAL REPORT

(Redacted)

The Board:
i) Received the report
ii) Noted that the report and minute should remain confidential

(Mr Measor and Mr Parkinson re-joined the meeting)

Bd/17/112 GCSE ENGLISH & MATHS UPDATE

Ms Quinn presented the report on the 2016/17 results. The achievement of 37% A*-C grades was significantly above the national average and was extremely pleasing. Maths would remain the area of focus as results were below national average, except for adults. Basic Skills for 16-18 year olds were also below national average and had fallen in 2016/17 and would therefore be a significant focus.

The Board:
i) Received the report

Bd/17/113 AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Mr Howells presented the report. Mr Blyth commented that this was comprehensive and the College was in a good position. Many different areas of the College's systems had been looked at in recent years, but governors did not have to rely entirely on internal auditors for assurance. He felt comforted by this report as Chair of the Committee. The Chair agreed this was very thorough. Mr Howells, Mr Blyth and the Committee were thanked for their contribution.

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report.

Bd/17/114 2016/17 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS & MANAGEMENT LETTERS

Mr Howells presented the report. The accounts and letters had already been considered and recommended for approval by the Audit and RCP Committees. Very few issues had been raised and none of significance. The only adjustment identified, which related to financial (FRS) reporting standard 102, was £120,000 for marketing costs. The impact of the actuarial revaluation of the Tyne and Wear Pension Fund was highlighted. As the College's finances were now medium satisfactory, it was no longer in intervention. Mr Howells and his team were congratulated on the report and a governor commented that it had been a long time since there had been an auditor's comment.

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report and financial statements for Sunderland College and Hartlepool Sixth Form College for 2016/17
- ii) Approved the reports and financial statements
- iii) Noted the financial position of Blue Square Trading Limited, City of Sunderland College Supplies Limited and Sunderland College Enterprises Limited and agreed to provide financial and other support to enable them to continue to trade, as per the recommendation of the Audit Committee
- iv) Agreed to provide KPMG with a management representations letter confirming general and specific matters in line with International Standards on Auditing. Mr Howells would inform the Chair when this was ready.

Bd/17/115 BUDGETARY CONTROL STATEMENTS – 2017/18 YEAR TO DATE

Mr Howells presented the report which had previously been discussed by the RCP Committee. The financial impact of the shortfall in ESFA funded learners was c. £1 million and this had already been highlighted at the Strategic Event. Covenants were now being monitored every quarter on a rolling 12-month basis.

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report

Bd/17/116 ESTATES & FINANCING UPDATE - CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION

(Redacted)

The Board:

- i) Received the report
- ii) (Redacted)
- iii) Deemed that the minute and paper should be confidential

Bd/17/117 GOVERNANCE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2016/17

The Clerk presented the report. He would meet with the Principal and Mrs Hodgson for further comments.

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report
- ii) Approved the closed off 2016/17 Governance QIP
- iii) Approved the 2016/17 Governance self-assessment return (SAR), subject to further comments from the Principal and Mrs Hodgson
- iv) Approved the 2017/18 Governance QIP

Bd/17/118 SELF-ASSESSMENT (WHOLE COLLEGE) 2016/17 & 2017/18 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Mr Harrett presented the report, which was the product of a lengthy process. Most of the issues identified in the 2016/17 QIP had been dealt with and a few had been carried forward into 2017/18. The report only related to Sunderland College. HSFC produced its SAR at faculty level. Next year's report would cover the merged college. The appendices had been considered and approved by the Validation Panel meeting on 21st November, which had been attended by several governors.

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report
- ii) Approved the 2016/17 closed off QIP
- iii) Approved the 2016/17 SAR
- iv) Approved the 2017/18 QIP

Bd/17/119 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Clerk presented the report. The revisions proposed were minor, mainly the updating of governors' terms of office.

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report
- ii) Approved the revised committee terms of reference

Bd/17/120 APPROVED MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES

Governors had received the approved minutes of the 5th October 2017 meeting of the Audit Committee and the 3rd October 2017 meeting of the RCP Committee.

The Board:

- i) Received the minutes for information.

Bd/17/121 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Governors were informed that the Chair and Mr McEldon had given Mr Howells approval to repay an element of the College's Tranche D borrowings in 2017/18 should this be required by Lloyds Bank.

Mr McEldon highlighted the Sunderland Business Group which was organised by the Business School. c.70 businesses were involved and he felt that the College should be asking for a step change in its activities. The Chair commented that this was worth a discussion before the next meeting. Three or four governors already attended in different capacities and Mr Barnett was encouraged to attend as a guest. The Principal commented that she would like to see more impact from the Group's activities, such as joint bids and not just meetings. The Chair added that the meetings were rather informal and Mr McEldon observed that the Group needed challenges.

Reports had appeared in the local media of the application to construct a £5 million National Centre for Imagination in the city centre. A strong bid for £3 million had been submitted to the NELEP for funding from an allocation of £15 million from the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund. The Chair and the Principal were seeking to arrange a meeting with Sunderland Culture about this. The University might relocate some of its provision to the Centre if this proceeded.

(Mr Measor and Mr Parkinson left the meeting)

(Redacted)

The Chair recorded his sincere gratitude to Mrs Fellows for her services as a governor since her appointment in July 2015. Her advice had been invaluable and he thanked her for her forensic questioning and clarity of thought. She had been a tremendous asset to the Board. Mrs Fellows responded that she had been keen to remain a governor after her departure from the LA but circumstances now made this too difficult. If there was anything she could assist the College with in the future, she would be glad to. A presentation was made to Mrs Fellows to thank her for her contribution to the Board.

The Chair thanked governors who had attended the last strategic event.

The Board:

- i) Approved the decision to repay an element of the College's Tranche D borrowings in 2017/18 if this was required by Lloyds Bank
- ii) Agreed governors on the Sunderland Business Group could discuss making proposals for its future direction
- iii) Noted the bid for the National Centre for Imagination
- iv) (Redacted)
- v) Agreed the relevant parts of the minute should remain confidential

Bd/17/103 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting would take place at 6pm on Tuesday 6th February 2018 in the Conference Room at City Campus.

The meeting closed at 7:30 pm