

Minutes of the 125th Meeting of the Board of Corporation of Sunderland College held on Tuesday 6th December 2016 at 6.00pm in the Conference Room, Washington Campus

PRESENT: Mr J Barnett, Mr G Blyth, Mr T Crompton, Ms A Fellows, Ms S Forster, Mrs C Gofton, Mrs A Hodgson, Mr A Holmes, Mr H Kemp, Mr R Lawson (Chair), Mr P McEldon, Mr J Phillips and Ms E Thinnesen

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

CLERK: Ms P Veitch

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Mr Barnett to his first meeting of the Board and introductions were made. The Chair went on to congratulate the Executive and all staff and students involved in organising or performing at the successful VIP dinner at the City Campus on 1st December.

Bd/16/100 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were accepted from Mrs S Atkinson, Ms E Bass and Mr Saelzer.

Ms Fellows declared an interest in item 116, but members agreed there was no requirement for Ms Fellows to withdraw.

Mrs Gofton declared an interest in item 116 and it was agreed that she withdraw whilst this item be discussed.

Bd/16/101 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD:

Special Meeting held on 14th October 2016

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Meeting held on 18th October 2016

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record subject to:

- Item 96i: the addition of 'and approved the appointment of Mr Barnett'.
- Item 98: removal of the word 'yet' from the final sentence of the final paragraph.

Bd/16/102 MATTERS ARISING

It was noted that items 71 and 86 were included in the agenda.

Item 82: The Senior Leadership Team is in the process of identifying a project lead to progress the strategic proposal.

Bd/16/103 EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Principal presented the report on national and regional activity and provided a detailed update on the progress of the Strategic Area Based Review. Steering Group 4 is on 16th January 2017, followed by Steering Group 5 on 8th February which will be followed by media announcements. Governors discussed the key messages emerging from the Area Review meetings and discussed the merger between South Tyneside and Tyne Met Colleges in relation to the IAMP.

In terms of College activity, the College has established a Transition Group to oversee and coordinate the changes required under the new apprenticeship reforms. The Principal extended her thanks to the Executive Director Commercial Activity and his team for their work and also to the Vice Principal Finance and Resources and his staff for the tremendous outcome of the recent SFA audit. Governors also gave their thanks for the HE Graduation and award ceremony which had been successful.

The Board:

- i) discussed and received the report; and
- ii) deemed content within the report relating to Area Review confidential.

Bd/16/104 COLLEGE FEES POLICY REVIEW FOR 2017/18

Governors noted that in accordance with the Governance Quality Improvement Plan, a report on the impact of College Fees and Bursary Policies is scheduled for the Resources and Capital Projects Committee in May 2017 to ensure they are effective and support the very best affordable student learning experience.

The Board:

- i) agreed to set the tuition and related fees policy for 19+ FE, Apprenticeships and HE provision in line with government and Funding Body policy for 2017/18; and
- ii) delegated authority to the Resources and Capital Projects Committee to agree the details resulting for Funding Body funded and other relevant provision; and
- iii) delegated authority to the SLT to waive or amend fees, where this is required due to market forces, or in cases of individual hardship; and
- iv) delegated authority to the SLT to agree appropriate fees for Full Cost and international work, based on market rates.

Bd/16/105 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY REVIEW

Governors reviewed the proposed revisions to the Policy previously discussed at the Equality and Diversity Committee which related to the inclusion of Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and additional sentences on Impact Assessment and adverse impact.

The Board approved the proposed revisions to the Equality and Diversity Policy.

Bd/16/106 SAFEGUARDING MONOTORING BI-ANNUAL REPORT

The Assistant Principal Student and Customer Experience provided the update on safeguarding concerns since the start of the academic year. Governors suggested that the wording could be amended from 'All members of the College community' to 'Vulnerable and all other adults' to provide greater clarity.

Governors listened to the winning radio commercial created by Seaham School which was aired on Sun FM.

Referring to recent national news reports regarding football abuse allegations, Governors questioned the safeguarding arrangements for the College's football coaches and expressed concern about potential risks associated with the Goals Centre, given it is an external organisation. The Assistant Principal advised that Goals has a policy to have a lead manager supported by non-DBS accredited staff, however as College learners access the facilities, the College has ensured that all Goals staff obtain DBS accreditation and is meeting the cost of doing so.

The Board:

- i) discussed and received the report; and
- ii) noted progress against the action plan; and
- iii) approved the proposed changes to the Safeguarding Policy subject to further consideration of the wording.

Bd/16/107i HEALTH SAFETY AND WELFARE BI-ANNUAL REPORT

Governors noted the current health and safety metrics and initiatives provided in consultation with an external health and safety consultant. As a result, the College has made significant improvements in this area. In response to a Governor's question, the Principal advised that staff absence due to accidents is recorded separately by Human Resources but this will be incorporated in future health and safety reports. Due to his experience, Mr Barnett offered to review the next draft report.

The Board:

- i) discussed and received the current Health and Safety metrics contained within the report, and
- ii) agreed to support the current Health and Safety initiatives in place with the external health and safety consultant.

Bd/16/107ii PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY DURING OVERSEAS TRAVEL

The Vice Principal Finance and Resources advised the guidance is designed to accompany the Health and Safety Policy and to deal with the issue of when staff travel overseas on College business. Governors discussed the policy and considered practice in other organisations whereby senior staff are strictly not permitted to travel together due to the significant risk to the organisation. It was considered that this required further consideration by the Senior Leadership Team.

The Board:

- i) received the report; and
- ii) resolved that the Senior Leadership Team should further consider travel arrangements for senior staff; and
- iii) requested the Guidance be updated accordingly and presented to the Board for approval.

Bd/16/108 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE REPORT

The Principal presented the report which identified:

- The College is currently working on a number of strategies to reduce sickness absence, including a reduction in occupational sick pay with the recognised trade unions.
- If redundancy is not included, then staff turnover is low for the sector.
- Due to the restructuring programme undertaken last academic year there has been an increase in recruitment activity. The College positively discriminates where applicants have declared a disability and meet the essential criteria.
- Managers are proactively using the College's Staff Capability Policy to ensure a quality teaching and learning experience.

Referring to recruitment and selection, Governors asked whether there was any data on success rates. As a result of manual recording systems this is not yet available, however Human Resources Management staff are working on this in order to provide better reports.

Governors discussed the cost of staff absence (circa £720k) and the benefits of identifying by department where the highest levels of absence are. The Principal confirmed this can be incorporated in future reports and advised this has been used in staff briefings at departmental level, but felt the reduction of occupational sick pay would be key.

It was noted that stress was the main reason for absence, but there had been low attendance at stress counselling sessions which needs to be further reviewed together with bereavement leave to provide a clearer picture. Governors felt the report was a good start in providing better reporting of this important area.

The Board:

- i) discussed and received the report; and
- ii) approved the proposed actions; and
- iii) agreed the report be deemed confidential due to the nature of its content.

Bd/16/109 INCOME DIVERSIFICATION BUSINESS PLAN

(Redacted)

The Board:

- i) discussed and received the report; and
- ii) considered and agreed income targets for 2016/17;and
- iii) agreed the report and minute be deemed confidential due to the commercial content.

Bd/16/110 REED/NCFE PERFORMANCE UPDATE

(Redacted)

The Board:

- i) (Redacted)
- ii) (Redacted)
- iii) Agreed the report and minute be deemed confidential due to the commercial content.

Bd/16/111 STUDENT VOICE REPORT

The Student Governor presented the report on student activity since the start of the academic year and highlighted the following key points:

- The College has a number of mechanisms to listen to and act upon student voice;
- An induction walkabout survey has been undertaken to obtain 'hot' feedback from students during an essential point of their College experience;
- Course committees have been undertaken across the majority of curriculum areas and show that students are positive about College;
- Action plans are in place to address areas of improvement.

Governors discussed the report's findings and thanked the Student Governor for providing valuable information on student voice. The Chair confirmed that the report will be fed into the meeting with Student Council scheduled the next day

The Board discussed and received the report.

Bd/16/112 LINK GOVERNOR FEEDBACK

Employer Facing Activity: Mr Holmes reflected on the impact of the forthcoming apprenticeship reforms and the levy, the expectation that it will be easier for organisations to register and the fact that Colleges will be dependent on growing the apprenticeship market. He discussed the risks of a price led market which could drive down quality. Whilst the College's strategy should be based on quality, he felt it imperative that the Board was aware of the risks.

English/Maths: Mrs Hodgson reported that work is due to start on Friday and the joint Link Governor will be progressing this.

The Board received the verbal updates.

It was agreed to consider the following item next and at 7.30pm Mrs Gofton withdrew from the meeting due to a declaration of interest. In accordance with Standing Order 16.2.4 the Student Governor was also required to withdraw from the meeting.

Bd/16/116 ESTATES AND FINANCING UPDATE (CLOSED ITEM)

Bd/16/113 AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Governors considered the report of the Audit Committee in detail which concluded:

‘The College’s audit arrangements, framework of governance, risk management and control, processes for the effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the institution and the safeguarding of its assets are adequate and effective’; and

The governing body’s responsibilities included in the annual financial statements have been satisfactorily discharged’.

The Chair of the Audit Committee commended the outcome of the recent SFA Funding Audit which demonstrated the wisdom of commissioning previous ILR audits and securing an opinion from the internal auditors.

The Board received and approved the Twentieth Audit Committee Annual Report.

Bd/16/114 ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Further to discussions at the Resources and Capital Projects Committee held on 22 November 2016, the Vice Principal Finance and Resources confirmed that the accounts now incorporate a capital adjustment note.

The Board:

- i) reviewed the College’s Report and Financial Statements for 2015/16; and
- ii) approved the report and financial statements; and
- 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; and
- iv) agreed to provide KPMG with a management representations letter confirming general and specific matters in line with International Standards on Auditing.

Bd/16/115 BUDGETARY CONTROL STATEMENTS

The Board received the report.

Bd/16/117 GOVERNANCE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2015/16

The Clerk first presented the closed off QIP for 2015/16 and went on to remind Governors that the Board has adopted the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges (the Code) in order to meet and exceed good governance requirements. The Code supports the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework for the effectiveness of Leadership and Governance.

The Governors' Self-assessment Working Group comprising the Clerk, Mrs Hodgson, Mr Blyth, Mr McEldon and Ms Fellows met on 21 September 2016 and 14 October 2016 (without Ms Fellows) to self-assess the Governing Body's performance during 2015-16, against the mandatory criteria laid down in the Code.

The Working Group concluded that it complies fully with each of the criteria and proposed a self-assessment grade 2 (good) which was endorsed by the validation panel. The Working Group has committed to build on the work undertaken to date and will continue to meet in order to assess against the discretionary criteria in order to achieve continuous improvement.

The Board:

- i) noted the 'close-off' to the Governance 2015-16 Improvement Plan; and
- ii) approved the Governance 2015-16 Self-Assessment Report; and
- iii) approved the 2015-16 Improvement Plan.

The Executive Director Commercial Activity left the meeting at 8.10pm

Bd/16/118 WHOLE COLLEGE SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT 2015/16

Governors discussed the proposed overall effectiveness grade of 2 (Good) and the documentation provided in the annexes. They questioned whether the improvement plans were realistic, given their size. The Deputy Principal confirmed that whilst they were achievable, the self-assessment process was being reviewed with the aim of streamlining the process but maintaining a reasonable level of detail too.

The Board:

- i) approved the closed 2015-16 QIP; and
- ii) approved the 2015-16 Whole College SAR; and
- iii) approved the 2016-17 QIP and Post Ofsted Action Plan.

Bd/16/119 APPROVED MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES

The Board received the minutes.

Bd/16/120 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair reminded Governors about the forthcoming lunch with student council, pre-arranged Governor performance reviews, the College carol service and the official launch arrangements for City Campus.

Bd/16/121 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting will take place at 6pm on Tuesday 7th February 2017 in the Conference room at City Campus.

The meeting closed at 8.21pm