

Minutes of the 132nd Meeting of the Board of Corporation of Sunderland College held on Tuesday 6th February 2018 at 6.00 pm in the Conference Room, City Campus

PRESENT: Mrs E Bass, Mr G Blyth, Ms J Cramman, Mr T Crompton, Cllr C Gofton, Mrs A Hodgson, Mr R Lawson (Chair), Mr S Marshall, Mr D Measor, Mr P McEldon, Mr J Parkinson, Mr M Patton, Ms E Thinnesen (Principal).

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

CLERK: Martin Gershman

Bd/18/001 APPOINTMENT OF JUNE CRAMMAN AND SIMON MARSHALL AS GOVERNORS

The appointment of Ms June Cramman and Mr Simon Marshall as governors had been recommended by the Governance Committee at its last meeting on 15th January 2018.

(Mr Marshall left the meeting)

The Board:

- i) Approved the appointment of June Cramman as a governor until 5th February 2022.
- ii) Approved the appointment of Simon Marshall as a governor until 5th February 2022.

(Mr Marshall re-joined the meeting)

Bd/18/002 PRESENTATION ON PEOPLE STRATEGY

Naomi Robson, Director of People and Organisational Development, gave a presentation on strategy. She explained her background to governors. The HR team at the College was professional, but its approach had been reactive rather than proactive, which would now change.

(Mrs Cramman joined the meeting)

Feedback had been obtained and this had informed the development of the strategy. The focus on value-added required an outstanding workforce and Ms Robson outlined the main elements of the strategy. Information on sickness absence had already been discussed at the Curriculum and Quality (CQC) and Resources and Capital Projects (RCP) Committees.

The Chair asked what the priority areas were. Mrs Robson identified the following areas:

- Workforce planning – the first forum to discuss this had met the previous week
- Employee engagement – a survey would be carried out in May to inform targeted activities
- Well-being – cancer awareness sessions were being held that day

- Reward and recognition – staff awards and a long-service dinner would be introduced

The senior leadership team (SLT) would be looking at the strategy in February. Key performance indicators would include turnover, engagement and absence, which would be benchmarked against the previous year.

The Chair asked if Ms Robson's role had any bearing on governors' work. The Principal responded that the RCP would be strengthened and a People and Organisational Development lead governor was proposed. *A governor asked about training for governors.* The Principal explained that this was the Clerk's responsibility. *Another governor asked if it was intended to shift responsibility for the management of staff away from HR to line management.* Mrs Robson responded that this would be a slow and gradual change to the culture, which would mean moving to partnership working and away from a traditional HR department. This would create some technical challenges. The governor welcomed this development and agreed that the College should be moving towards this model. The Chair commented that the presentation had been very helpful and the measures being taken were due for implementation.

(Ms Robson left the meeting)

Bd/18/003 APOLOGIES AND CONSENT FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received and absence consented to from Mr J Barnett and Mr R Saelzer. The absence of Mr K Ramanathas was also consented to.

Bd/18/004 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER & 5 DECEMBER 2017

The minutes of the meetings held on 21st November 2017 and 5th December 2017 were accepted as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

Bd/18/005 MATTERS ARISING

None.

Bd/18/006 EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Principal presented her report to governors. She summarised a letter sent by the FE Commissioner to all Chairs and Principals and his annual report. The features of a successful college which he identified were:

- Have strong leadership with openness and transparency as its fundamental values
- Be able to balance the needs of the college curriculum with achieving a high quality of provision
- Ensure an excellent student experience whilst operating within the College's financial capacity
- Recognise the importance of accurate planning and forecasting
- Where problems arise colleges will manage these earlier
- Make progress in all of the above with continuous awareness and responses to the local context and educational environment

The FE Commissioner advised there to be a costed curriculum plan, setting out the margin, for every course. The Principal said this may be something that Governors might like to think about.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) had met with the ESFA that day and they had informed the Principal that the ESFA had no concerns about the College. The College had been asked by the AoC to take the leading role in national lobbying for 16-19 funding.

A consultation on the new insolvency regime for FE colleges was ongoing and governors should look at and if necessary respond to this.

The Newcastle College Group (NCG) was leading on lobbying on votes for 16 and 17 year-olds. The Chair asked student governors for their views. They responded that although there had been a growth in political activity and awareness among the young, most were still not really engaged. Another governor observed that this had not been among the top five issues raised during the young people's State of the City debate. Ms Morton pointed out that the College tried to encourage political engagement as part of British values. A governor commented that adults were no better informed or engaged and that young people had their own opinions, which should be valued. Another governor observed that there was an opportunity for colleges to help produce the best politically informed generation. This could be picked up in staff development, but it was essential to avoid any bias.

Consultation on the Strategic Plan for 2018-21 was almost complete, including with external stakeholders and this had been looked at by the SLT the previous day.

Mr Harrett, Ms Morton and Ms Quinn were congratulated on curriculum performance. Jackie Moreland's presentation to the CQC on value-added strategies had shown that the College was moving in the right direction. Mr Harrett had carried out a mapping exercise with outstanding colleges and Sunderland's performance was comparable.

The College's success in securing the apprenticeship contract with Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust was highlighted and welcomed by governors.

(Mrs Bass, Mr Measor and Mr Parkinson left the meeting)

(Redacted)

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report
- ii) Noted that the CQC would consider a costed curriculum plan.
- iii) Noted that members should familiarise themselves with the implications of the insolvency regime and feedback any questions into the consultation by 12th February.
- iv) (Redacted)
- v) (Redacted)
- vi) (Redacted)
- vii) (Redacted)
- viii) Noted that the relevant parts of the minute and paper should remain confidential

(Ms Bass, Mr Measor and Mr Parkinson re-joined the meeting)

Bd/18/007 COMPLAINTS BI-ANNUAL REPORT & ANNUAL POLICY REVIEW

Ms Morton presented the report. She highlighted that there had been a reduction in complaints compared to the previous year and all complaints had been resolved within the period. The only HE complaint was not academic-related.

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report

Bd/18/008 ENGLISH & MATHS UPDATE

Ms Quinn presented the report, which had previously been discussed at the CQC. A governor commented that it had been rigorously challenged and successfully defended at the meeting.

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report

Bd/18/009 HEADLINE COLLEGE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (PIs)

Mr Harrett presented the report, which had previously been discussed at the CQC. The Board had previously agreed draft PIs which had now been updated. These were mainly positive for the College, but Sunderland Sixth Form and HSFC needed to maximise achievement and reduce withdrawals. Retention and attendance also needed to improve for Higher National provision, although this had not fallen significantly below 2016/17. *A governor asked which retention strategies were in use.* The in-year retention rate of 97.5% was high and had risen 4.3% above 2016/17, 6.7% above the national average. Drop-off at the end of the year needed to be looked at more closely, although statistics showed an improvement this year, to maximise the retention of students in education. *Another governor asked if AS levels were a help or hindrance to retention.* Mr Harrett responded that this was a national issue but was not yet clear and further monitoring was required. FE colleges had generally retained AS levels, although these no longer contributed towards A level points, while sixth form colleges had tended to move to two-year linear programmes. Linear A levels at HSFC appeared to have had a significant negative impact on retention rates. The College had a mixed strategy and while most subjects would take AS level at the end of the first year, the creative subjects were linear over two years, because of the portfolio submission requirements. Mr Hughes had attended a conference on the subject and informed governors that the retention rate on linear courses was 77.8%. There was an issue with getting those on two-year courses to start their second year. A governor commented that anecdotally, AS levels were a motivator. *Students should be asked for their views at year end. She also wondered whether AS levels could be a marketing opportunity if not many schools and sixth forms were offering these.*

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report.
- ii) Noted that students would be asked for feedback at year end on whether AS levels encouraged them to continue to A level

Bd/18/010 TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT

Mr Harrett presented the report, which had previously been discussed at the CQC. He explained that a number of measures had been implemented since the CQC meeting and many were ongoing. *A governor commented that the CQC would consider how the results triangulated with the findings from observations.*

The Board:
i) Received and noted the report.

(Mr Harrett left the meeting)

Bd/18/011 APPRENTICESHIP PERFORMANCE UPDATE

(Redacted)

(Mr Harrett re-joined the meeting)

The Board:
i) Received and noted the report
ii) (Redacted)
iii) (Redacted)
iv) Noted that the minute and paper should remain confidential

Bd/18/012 CHANGES TO HE REGULATIONS & TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (TEF) METRICS

Mr Harrett presented the report, which had previously been discussed at the CQC. A working party was being set up to address the requirements for registration with the Office for Students (OfS) by the deadline of the end of April.

(Cllr Gofton left the meeting)

The fees for registration were quite significant for smaller providers of HE such as the College. The new regulator was supposed to make it easier to obtain degree-awarding powers and open up the HE market to the college sector, but the consultation documents did not suggest this would necessarily be the case in practice. The College's TEF metrics indicated that it was still in the silver position and the decision had been taken not to apply to vary this yet, as achievement needed to further improve. The Quality Improvement Plan had been amended to take account of results, leaver destinations and the National Student Survey outcomes.

The Board:
i) Received and noted the report
ii) Noted the establishment of the OfS working party.

Bd/18/013 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES (SEND)

Ms Morton presented the report, which had previously been discussed at the CQC. There

had not been any significant change to outcomes. Achievement of 16-18 year olds had fallen by 1.1% and the Equality and Diversity Committee was examining this more closely. *A governor pointed out that Sunderland LA had been working on the area-based SEND process. This had been extremely challenging and the College could be one of the partners looked at. He recommended that the College study the findings of the Durham area-based SEND review. Another governor agreed that there was a high degree of scrutiny and that this was an OfSTED priority.* Mrs Morton responded that the College's SEND arrangements were effective. *The governor asked for a definition of effective and emphasised that it was important the right terminology was used and that there was hard evidence to justify this.*

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report
- ii) Noted the recommendation that it should consider the findings of the Durham area-based SEND review.

Bd/18/014 BUDGETARY CONTROL STATEMENTS 2017/18 TO DATE

Mr Howells presented the report, which had previously been discussed by the RCP. He emphasised that the budgetary position remained very tight and the College was critically examining all non-staff costs such as licenses and exam fees. The falling ESFA student numbers would result in a reduction in income of c. £1.5M, which tied into the savings target.

(Redacted)

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report
- ii) (Redacted)
- iii) Noted that part of the minute should remain confidential.

(Mrs Bass, Mr Measor and Mr Parkinson left the meeting)

Bd/18/015 ESTATES & FINANCING UPDATE - CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION

(Redacted)

The Board:

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

(Mrs Bass, Mr Measor and Mr Parkinson re-joined the meeting)

Bd/18/016i GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS PART A

The Clerk presented the report. The proposed lead governor roles would be linked to the Strategic Plan objectives. A governor commented that it was essential that governors took an active role beyond attending meetings, if the College was to achieve outstanding

governance. The Principal explained that she wanted to enable governors to be able to scrutinise the performance of the College in depth and part of this was to engage with staff and students. Another governor emphasised the importance of governors fulfilling the expectations set out in the paper. The Chair pointed out that this was ambitious and made a significant call on governors' time, but it was the right thing to do. Another governor confirmed that OfSTED expected all governors to have an in-depth understanding of their college, which could not be achieved purely from attending meetings and they needed to speak to learners. Governors should contact the Chair with their chosen lead areas, which would be reported to the next meeting.

The following changes to Committee membership were approved:

- Mr McEldon was appointed to the Audit Committee and would become Chair on 1st September 2018. He would stand down from the RCP after its next meeting.
- Mr Crompton was appointed to the RCP and would become Chair on 1st September 2018. He would stand down from the CQC after its next meeting.
- Mr Barnett was appointed to the RCP.
- Mrs Cramman was appointed to the CQC.
- Mr Patton and Mr Marshall agreed to serve on whichever Committee the Chair and Principal identified and this would be reported to the next meeting.

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report
- ii) Approved the proposed lead governor arrangements
- iii) Noted that governors should inform the Chair of their preferred lead areas by 20th March 2018
- iv) Approved the changes to committee membership

(Mrs Bass, Mr Measor, Mr Parkinson, the Principal, Mr N Harrett, Mr D Howells, Mr M Hughes, Ms V Morton, Mr I Nixon and Ms J Quinn left the meeting)

Bd/18/016ii GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS PART B

The Clerk presented the report and highlighted the outcomes of governor performance review.

(The Clerk left the meeting)

Bd/18/016ii REMUNERATION (CLOSED ITEM)

(Redacted)

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the report
- ii) Approved the senior post holder review
- iii) (Redacted)
- iv) Deemed that the minute and paper should remain confidential

(Mrs Bass, Mr Measor, Mr Parkinson, the Principal, Mr N Harrett, Mr D Howells, Mr M Hughes, Ms V Morton, Mr I Nixon, Ms J Quinn and the Clerk re-joined the meeting)

Bd/18/017 APPROVED MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES

Governors had received the approved minutes of the 2nd October 2017 meeting of the Governance Committee, the 16th October 2017 meeting of the CQC and the 21st November 2017 meeting of the RCP Committee.

The Board:

- i) Received and noted the minutes for information.

Bd/18/018 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Clerk highlighted the change of date for the next strategy event from 22nd February to **3:00-5:00 pm on Tuesday 8th May 2018.**

The Clerk informed governors that training sessions on the governor dashboard were to begin. The purpose of these sessions would be to train governors in the use of the dashboard, which they would then evaluate and feedback on before implementation of the final version for September 2018.

Governors who were experiencing difficulties with their iPads or email accounts would be contacted directly by Neil Hall.

The Beacon Award celebration held the previous Wednesday was highlighted. The Principal commented that staff had appreciated this.

Bd/18/019 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting would take place at **6:00 pm on Tuesday 20th March 2018** in the Conference Room at City Campus.

The meeting closed at 8:00 pm