

**MINUTES**

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Gordon Smith (Chair) Caroline Allen (Vice Chair) – from 6.40pm Jean Cook Martin Corney Coral Josephs (Business Support staff) Anita McGowan (Academic staff governor) Trevor Morgan Craig O'Donnell Frances Wadsworth (Principal) Piers White Jackie Wilding
<b>ALSO ATTENDING:</b>	Keith Oxspring (Chief Operating Officer -COO) Andy Smith (Deputy Chief Executive -DCE) Jo Bland (Director of Human Resources - DHR) Kristoff Kerr (Vice President – Student Body),
<b>CLERK:</b>	Melissa Drayson
<b>APOLOGIES</b>	James Farmer (HE Student Governor) Peter Olusakin (FE Student Governor) Clare Mackie Matthew Sims  Kevin Zuchowski-Morrison was not present
<b>QUORUM</b>	The meeting was quorate throughout
<b>TIMING</b>	18.00 – 20.48

<b>Item no.</b>		<b>Action Lead</b>
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**Presentation: Area Reviews.**

Richard Robinson, Barclays Bank

*Governors were issued with hard copies of the Powerpoint presentation.*

The Principal introduced the briefing. Governors were informed that the South London sub-regional Area Review was due to commence at the end of April. The first Steering Group meeting would take place at Croydon College on 22 April, preceded by a meeting for all governors (and key stakeholders) in the region.

Richard Robinson outlined a range of issues to be considered within the Area Review process – a copy of his presentation and notes can be requested from the Clerk. He was thanked for a very useful presentation.

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**1. i. Chair's introduction and apologies for absence.**

The order in which agenda items were taken would be altered to allow the Vice President of the student body to provide Student Voice report on behalf of the student governor first.

Apologies were as listed on the front page.

**ii. Declaration of interests**

Gordon Smith repeated the declaration to Finance and Resources Committee that he had become Chair of the Octavo Partnership, with which the college had a small amount of business.

**iii. Minutes of the meeting on 1 December 2015 and 3 February 2016**

Some minor corrections were made to the minutes and, subject to these, the Minutes were approved as an accurate record and were signed by the Chair

**iv. Matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda**

The Clerk confirmed that advice had been taken on governor insurance cover relating to Prevent liability. This would be recirculated to governors

It was also confirmed that, whilst student attendance had been covered in some detail by the Learning and Quality Committee, it would form a separate item at the June meeting.

**DCE**

**2. Evaluation of Standards**

**i. Principal's Report**

*Supporting paper presented by the Principal and CEO and Deputy Chief Executive.*

An update on the written report was provided, and key headlines were highlighted.

**1.1 Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

The final Qualification Success Rate (QAR) sector data for 2014-15 was not yet available yet, so close evaluation of college performance compared with the National picture was not yet possible. It was believed that the Ofsted FE dashboard, which used the QAR data to enable Colleges and other providers to benchmark their performance, was to be discontinued.

Governors asked what data Ofsted was currently using to inform inspections. QAR data would be one tool, but a number of factors would be considered to develop lines of enquiry.

Predicted success rates for Maths and English in 2015-16 were

reported as 50-55%. The Student Governor confirmed that absenteeism had decreased, due to recent student initiatives. Governors also verified that the levels of English language required for Functional Skills English and Maths created a barrier for some learners.

Governors raised further questions and challenges relating to the KPI dashboard. It was particularly noted that attendance continued to be a challenge. This was due to the complexity of the circumstances of many of the College's students and a significant amount of staff time was spent in providing support. There was evidence, however, that a close individualised approach was having a positive impact on attendance. The change in the payment of student bursaries from monthly to weekly, and linking these to attendance, had resulted in a significant improvement in some areas.

### **Applications**

Applications had risen to 983 and now appeared to be increasing at a faster rate than the previous year.

### **Partnerships**

In response to questions from governors it was confirmed that the partnership with Chelsea FC was positive but that quality was being monitored closely to ensure that it met college standards. Numbers of students were currently small (though viable) but there had been a rise in applicants for next year. It was estimated that there would be 60 students across levels in 2016-17, with a further 60 recruited to re-engagement programmes.

A launch event, attended by fifteen employers, had been held at Stamford Bridge for an advanced apprenticeship in sports.

Governors sought assurance that there was clarity about measures of success and a clear exit strategy should partnerships not be working. The Executive would be seeking to develop the existing Heads of Terms into a more robust agreement.

### **4.0 Property**

Proposals had been scrutinised fully by both the Chair's Strategy Group, and the Finance and Resources Committee. Legal advice was currently being sought on the legal agreement for College Green from further update and this would go to the Chairs' Strategy Group for further discussion.

### **6.0 Events**

Governors who had attended gave positive feedback on the Nat West sponsored 'power breakfast' event during national Apprenticeship Week.

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It was noted that the mayoral candidates of the two main political parties, Sadiq Khan and Zac Goldsmith, had been invited to the college.

**ii. Learning and Quality Committee (LQC) report**  
*Supporting paper presented by the Chair of LQC*

The Chair reported that the college had arranged a quality review visit from a former Ofsted inspector and current Associate FE Commissioner, part of which had involved a review of governance. Evidence of challenge from governors, especially in relation to scrutiny of quality and standards, had been discussed. It was considered that both reports to governors and the reporting of discussion would be reviewed by LQC to ensure that the high level of challenge was effectively recorded.

The staff governor asked for further explanation of the decision to continue to grade lesson observations as Ofsted no longer formally issued grades for individual lessons. Other governors supported the College's stance, as a clear and transparent framework for judging lessons was essential for staff development. This should include lesson observation grades as part of a broader range of measures. Management confirmed that teachers know that they will receive written and verbal feedback and an individual action plan and that there was evidence this approach improved student progress.

The two recommendations from the Committee were considered and Jean Cook was thanked for agreeing to Chair the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. **That Jean Cook be appointed Chair of the LQC**
- ii. **That the revised LQC Terms of Reference be approved.**

**iii. The Learner Experience: Student Governor report**  
*Oral report by the Vice President of the Student Body, Kristoff Kerr.*

**Maths month**

A range of promotional activity had been held across the college with a positive impact in terms of raising students' awareness of the importance and value of maths in everyday life and to their progression. Student Feedback had been positive with many saying that they would like further similar events. A positive impact had been an increase in attendance at Maths and English exams.

**English**

Feedback on activity to promote English had been good overall, although more could be done in relation to evening classes to mirror activity in daytime classes (eg mock exams, workshops).

**Employability week**

Employers from different industries had visited the college with

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each curriculum area hosting a specific employer on each day. Activities included mock interviews with real employers, who then provided feedback; apprenticeship information and advice on next steps after finishing college, and employer talks about different job roles within their companies.

Feedback from students had been highly positive, especially about the mock interviews. Future activities included:

- Working with students who have taken part in volunteering, to reflect this on their CVs as a selling point for employers and universities.
- Next term, students involved in volunteering would have mock interviews with the Ministry of Defence and other employers to improve interview skills and to demonstrate the impact of volunteering on employability.

The Chair reflected that the report mirrored closely the most pressing current issues for Board and underlined how clearly messages were being transmitted across the student body. The Principal reported that the presentations by ESOL students during Maths week had been exceptional.

Kristoff reported that he had gained an offer from the University of Oxford to study experimental psychology and was currently applying for scholarships. Governors congratulated him on this outstanding achievement.

### **iii. Safeguarding and Prevent Duty**

*Supporting paper presented by the Director of Human Resources*

The contents of the report were noted and gave rise to further discussion of the following:

- The College had worked very closely with the local Metropolitan Police to raise awareness of the dangers related to carrying knives. It was not believed that knives were an issue within the college, but posed a risk in the wider community. Activities included leaflets, talks and advice on what to do if a friend was carrying a knife. There was also a low key randomised 'wanding' programme.
- A need had been identified to do more work with students on the safe transport of knives needed for their courses, e.g. in catering and carpentry
- The efficient management of Prevent referrals reflected the levels of awareness of and receptivity of staff to this issue.
- A description was provided of the role of the safeguarding governor. Statistics were shared and discussed with the safeguarding governor at least once a term. The safeguarding governor also reviewed the annual safeguarding report. The safeguarding governor was also kept informed of any individual issues of concern.

All governors, who had not already done so, were reminded to complete the Prevent online training by the Chair by 8 April.

**Governors**

**3. Strategic Update**  
*Supporting paper by the Principal*

There had been a high level of liaison with other organisations in advance of the Area Review which was due to commence on 22 April for the South London sub-region. This included discussions with key stakeholders and Colleges in the sub region and surrounding area, considering alignment of opportunity and objectives that would benefit learners. The priorities were to address the current duplication of 16-18 provision within Croydon and to expand opportunities for higher level skills.

The College had recently bid to the Council for 14-16 alternative provision, to ensure appropriate provision for learners across the borough.

To complement and augment data analysis that the College had already undertaken, travel-to-learn data analysis in a common format had been commissioned with RCU by all but one of the colleges in the region.

The college was required to submit initial information to JARDU (the Area Review team) by 8 April, and 19 May had been identified for the site visit.

The Board reiterated the need to ensure that there was sufficient capacity to undertake the necessary work relating to the review, and that investment in this should be made if necessary. It was agreed that the risk of distraction from current core business, and the quality of the student experience, was high.

The Board identified 6 areas which require an investment of additional resource going forward:

- The Area Review
- The University of Sussex/HE partnership
- Growth in Apprenticeships
- Exploration of distance learning as a development opportunity
- The Estates strategy
- Providing 'a clear line of sight to work'

The role of the Chair's Strategy Group was discussed, in terms of progressing thinking in these key areas, and advising the Board. Governors also stressed the importance of ensuring that associated risks were also identified.

**4. Business Planning and Management**

**i. Financial Monitoring**

**a. Finance and Resources Committee Report**

*Minutes of the meeting on 1 March and items for approval, presented by the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee.*

The Chair of F&R drew attention to headlines from the January management accounts:

- Revenues were £2m short of the budget figure
- These were partially offset by cost management savings of £1.3m. F&R were encouraged both by the robustness of cost management and responsiveness to opportunities for revenue development.

The Committee had held detailed discussions about the College Green development, and had agreed that it was important to take the lead in terms of negotiating the content of the agreement with the Council.

The potential sale of Heath Clark park provided an important opportunity to raise the revenue to cover future strategic investment needs. The decision had, therefore, been made to proceed to a formal marketing stage.

It was reported that, since the Committee had met, members had approved by written resolution, a proposal to increase the value of the contract awarded to Learning Curve for 19+ classroom delivered provision, to £750k. This was within the delegated authority of the Committee, as set out in the Financial Regulation was, therefore, noted by the Board.

#### **b. Updated financial position**

*January 2016 management accounts*

An updated income and expenditure table was tabled and the key headlines was noted:

- As reported by the Chair of F&R, the full-year income had fallen considerably by over £2m but, through careful management of resources, the historical cost deficit remained unchanged at £277. Through the maximisation of opportunities, e.g. Learning Curve, it was hoped that this would be reduced further.
- Acquire learning was underperforming against target, but was making a modest contribution.
- The Skills Funding Agency had confirmed their position on 16-18 Apprenticeship funding over contract value. Any excess incurred up to end of March would be funded. This amounted to £140k for the College.

### **ii. Audit Committee**

#### **a. Audit Provider proposals**

*Supporting paper presented by the Chair of Audit and the Clerk*

The Board noted and endorsed the background and rationale to the proposal set out in the paper which necessitated a decision to switch audit firms. It was agreed that this provided a pragmatic

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solution to the concerns which had arisen regarding the quality of recent internal audits. It was also noted that the net cost to the college, of approximately £1k, was not material.

**RESOLVED: that the following recommendations be approved:**

- i. **That RSM be engaged as the Internal Audit Service provider and BDO as the Financial Statements and Regularity Audit Provider with immediate effect**
- ii. **That the requirements of the Financial Regulations for a full tendering process be waived in this instance.**

**b. Audit Committee report**

*Supporting paper presented by the Chair of the Audit Committee*

It was noted that the number of days allocated for internal audit had been queried and assurance sought on how they might be deployed most effectively. The best use of the remaining days would be discussed with the new Internal Audit Provider.

The other key areas discussed by the Committee, as detailed in the Minutes, were noted.

**RESOLVED: that the following recommendations of the Audit Committee be approved:**

- i. **That the draft HR Strategy be taken to the Finance and Resources Committee on 29 June**
- ii. **That the revised Data Protection Policy be approved**
- iii. **That the revised Audit Committee terms of reference be approved.**

**iii. Risk Report**

*Supporting paper by the Principal*

The value of the board-level review of all key strategic risks as a standing item was reinforced. There were no recommended changes to the risk register or the rating of risk.

**5. Governance**

**i Chair's Strategy Group terms of reference**

*Supporting paper by the Clerk, presented by the Chair*

The Terms of Reference had been brought to the Board in recognition of the need to formalise the work of the Group. It was noted that the group would be advisory only in the first instance, and it would have the powers to invite additional governors to attend meetings according to any particular areas of expertise.

**RESOLVED: that the Terms of Reference of the Chair's Strategy Group be approved, with a core membership of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board, the Committee Chairs, the Principal/CEO and the Executive Team.**

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**ii. Governor reports on non-committee items**

There were no additional reports from governors on non-committee items,

**iii Chair's Actions for ratification**

There were no Chair's Actions requiring Board ratification

**6. Other Business and evaluation**

Governors asked what information the college gathered from employers to inform and grow apprenticeship provision. The DCE responded that the college relied on a range of market intelligence including networking with stakeholders at different levels of the organisation. FE Associates was being commissioned to provide more detailed analysis to augment existing LEP and other research on skills requirements.

The Chair reported that Anita McGowan, was coming to the end of her term of office as the academic staff governor. An election would be organised in the summer term and Anita would be welcome to re-stand. The Board took the opportunity to thank Anita for her contribution and insight and undertook to invite her to a future meeting to acknowledge her work as a governor properly.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_