

- PRESENT:** Gordon Smith (Chair)
Caroline Allen (until item 8)
Ben Geeson
Roz Liard
Clare Mackie
Trevor Morgan
Craig O'Donnell
Mariam Sow
Tim Thirlwall
Frances Wadsworth (Principal)
Kate Ward
Piers White
- ATTENDING:** Chay Champness (Chief Operating Officer - COO)
Andy Smith (Deputy Chief Executive – DCE)
Jane Stroud (Clerk)
- APOLOGIES:** Caroline Allen (early departure)
Kene Ibezi
Stephan John
Anita McGowan
Matt Simms (new member)

The following table identifies the main issues and challenges from this meeting which are to be followed up either at subsequent Full Board Meetings, or at Committee Meetings, or by members of the Executive Team

Issue for Follow-up	Committee / Executive	Report back to Full Board
Agenda Item 5 – Principal's Report		
16-18 enrolment	F&R Committee for financial implications LQC for curriculum and future enrolment implications	Through Reports from Committee Chairs
Agenda Item 6 – KPIs		
2012/13 success rates Impact in addressing Maths/English/ Functional Skills Quality and future of A Levels	LQC	Through Report from Committee Chair
Impact of performance of Croydon standards at Key Stage 4 on the College Impact of management action on student punctuality		

INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed all those present and thanked those who had given up their afternoon for the Strategic Planning Workshop and Governors' Self- Assessment.

Jane Stroud was **APPOINTED** as Clerk for the meeting.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and noted as above.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No new declarations were made. The Clerk confirmed that the Register of Interests had nearly been completed for the new academic year.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meetings of 3 July 2013 were signed and agreed as a true record.

3.1 Matters Arising From These Minutes

Item 4 Principal's Report

A Memorandum of Understanding with LB Croydon regarding the disposal of the Barclay Road site is still under discussion.

Item 6 Risk Management

There had been no changes since the July meeting, and the risk management report scheduled for October was postponed until December.

Item 10 Student Union Accounts

These would be reported to the Finance & Resources Committee meeting in November.

4 MEMBERSHIP

The Chair welcomed new members, T Morgan, C O'Donnell and M Sow. The appointment of the student governor M Sow, elected as Student President, was **CONFIRMED**.

5 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The report was **RECEIVED**. The Principal highlighted the enrolment statistics, above target in some places and below in others. Overall 16-18 enrolment was below target. Some other areas, currently below target, were expected to meet target later in the year. The exception to this was part-time HE provision which was not expected to meet target due to the price of what were effectively full cost courses. There had been a pleasing level of uptake for the student loan facility which had been increased by the SFA to cover increased numbers.

Governors asked about the impact of under enrolment on the budget. The Principal confirmed that this would mean reduction in the next financial year's EFA contract and funding in relation to 16-18 FT enrolment, but emphasised that the final numbers were not yet available and so the probable impact had yet to be determined.

The Principal outlined that success rates for 2012/13 were being finalised but were predicted to be c80% for all long courses, a pleasing improvement. However she noted that despite this significant rise, outcomes would still probably be below the national average. Functional

Skills outcomes were on target, but these in particular needed to improve more. Funding and policy imperatives had led to an enlargement of the full time programme of study for 16 – 18s, with an emphasis on English, Maths and Employability. The College was taking an holistic approach to Employability itself, and she referred governors to the flowchart which outlined the college employability strategy: 'Employability – It's all about work! 2013-2014' attached to the paper.

The Principal also touched upon

1. Strategic Planning, with reference to the workshop that had preceded the meeting, and also the Strategic Planning Flowchart attached;
2. The merger of the College's internal auditors, RSM Tenon, with the external auditors, Baker Tilly LLP. This would not compromise the College and would be reviewed by the Audit Committee;
3. The introduction of MyProgress Tracker was held out as an example of good project management; this system replaces the previous in-house approach and provides more effective tracking of learner progress.
4. International activity, which would be reported at the next Finance & Resources Committee meeting;
5. Staff bonuses: in line with the previous decision of the Corporation, staff bonuses of £300 pro-rata are being paid. The Chair of Governors had been able to attend the staff meeting at which this was announced.

Governors expressed concern about what would happen if the contractual long stop date for the Tower Block project was breached. This and other property matters would be discussed further at the next Finance & Resources Committee meeting.

The Chair commented that the Finance & Resources Committee would also want to discuss further the financial implications of enrolment. Learning & Quality Committee would want to examine enrolment, and also the quality of, and long terms plans for, A Levels.

Governors queried how the College went about identifying (staff) skills gaps, in order to be ready to deliver where needed. The Principal's response was that this was an aspect of the curriculum and business planning process: enrolment patterns were analysed, skills required identified, and recruitment and CPD tailored to meet demand. The College was looking at creative ways of recruiting and had had a positive summer campaign to recruit sessional staff, working to move away from reliance on agency staff.

6 KPIS & OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS AGAINST 2012/13 TARGETS

The report was **RECEIVED**, and an enlarged copy of the dashboard included in the papers was tabled.

The DCE reported that success rates were close to or on target in many areas, and that final outcomes would be reported to the Learning & Quality Committee. He gave results to date against those expected for Learner Responsive, HE, and Employer Responsive provision. In general targets were being met due to improved achievement rather than retention, and further work was needed on retention. Functional Skills, while being on target, required significant improvement at levels 1 and 2, and A Levels were also a concern.

Governors asked about the extent to which predicted grades matched results. The DCE said that overall predictions had been close, but that this masked large discrepancies for individual courses. He had asked the Dean of UCC and the Assistant Principal involved to identify the 10 courses with highest variations in order to explain why they had found it hard

to make accurate predictions, and would be following this up. This will be reported back to LQC, together with information on the need for and impact of future training to address this.

Governors also asked about the extent to which the trends experienced by the College reflected the national and local picture. Officers replied that the national success rate for Functional Skills overall was 69%. The College's allocated HMI inspector had commented on poor Key Stage 4 performance in the Croydon area. OFSTED had asked the College to do some research into whether this impacted on the College's performance.

The COO reported on some issues with learner numbers, including that staff utilisation was not as good as it should be. It was pleasing that HR support for performance management had led to improvements in sickness levels.

Governors queried what plans there were to improve Functional Skills. Officers replied that specialist teachers had been appointed for English and Maths. Vocational areas used vocational specialist staff for Functional Skills, but had not been able to recruit as desired. The College was looking at ways to work with and support existing staff. There was a change in the order that Functional Skills English would be delivered, starting with reading and writing instead of speaking and listening as these were deemed to be the most critical skills for learners in order to be successful on their programmes. The College had taken a stronger central steer, with established set dates for Functional Skills assessment weeks across the College, rather than letting individual areas set their own dates, to aid transparency and aid monitoring.

Following another question the DCE said that all Full Time students should be working on their Functional Skills and there were two issues with setting the level they were working to: initial assessment and diagnostic assessment. Students should have a level of Functional Skills not more than one level below their main qualification, but 90 learners at entry Level 3 had been unsuccessful in re-sitting their Level 1 English and Maths. They had been put on an intensive programme for completion by the end of December. The College could not be complacent with students that had already achieved Level 2 Functional Skills. They should also be stretched and challenged and allowed to demonstrate improvement.

The very ambitious attendance target had not been met, which was a concern and would be a key issue to address and monitor. Governors also asked the DCE about measures to improve punctuality. The DCE noted that a whole college effort was being taken to address punctuality, with no meetings timetabled for 8.30-9.30 so that all academic and support managers were working together to greet students, address lateness and set an appropriate culture and expectation.

The Student Governor reported students' concerns about Functional Skills, arising because of their importance for university entrance. The DCE arranged to meet with her to progress and address the concerns.

The member from the University of Sussex offered use of the University's website and on-line resources to help students in transferring from school to HE at the College. These had helped increase retention at Sussex. The DCE undertook to follow this up.

7 STUDENT MATTERS

7.1 Student Governor Report

The Student Governor introduced herself stating that this was her fourth year at the College, progressing each year. An oral report was **RECEIVED** on student activities with reference to the Student Life magazine. A highlight was the work with UNICEF. The College is the only

UNICEF Rights Respecting FE College in the country, and student UNICEF activities culminated in one student being chosen to represent UNICEF UK at the UN in New York for Malala Day. A number of other voluntary activities were also reported on, and students were said to be looking forward to planning many activities in the current year.

Governors asked for assurances that marketing opportunities created by the UNICEF activities had been maximised and were told that there had been significant coverage in national and local newspapers, on Facebook, Twitter, Sky News, and even on Amnesty International's website.

8 GOVERNANCE ISSUES

8.1 Update from Governor Self-Assessment

An oral report was **RECEIVED** from the Chair who reported that formal Self-Assessment of Governance as part of the College's Leadership had taken place that afternoon. Governors had self-assessed as 'Good' as a result of the clear and effective actions the Board had taken to address weaknesses in the College, and which were resulting in strong improvements in student outcomes **ACTION:** The Clerk to write up the Self-Assessment for approval at the December meeting of the Governing Body.

8.2 Update on Arrangements for Clerking 2013/14. Clerk Appointment

The Clerk for the meeting left the room for this item which was minuted by one of the governors.

The report was **RECEIVED** from the Chair.

Jane Stroud was **APPOINTED** as Clerk to the Governors with immediate effect for the period until 31 July 2014.

8.3 Governor Performance Indicators

The report was **RECEIVED**. It was noted that Governors had also considered the information as evidence for their Self-Assessment exercise that afternoon. Members confirmed that the Governing Body had fulfilled the performance indicators, including those that the new Clerk had not yet had time to verify.

Members requested that the Search & Governance Committee undertake a review of the performance indicators, and also consider further the implications of the Skills Audit.

8.4 Annual Review of Governance Items

The report was **RECEIVED**, requesting that Governors review the Standing Orders, Committee Terms of Reference, Membership Policy, Governors Code of Conduct and Scheme of Delegation and other Governance Procedures. Changes were recommended to the Standing Orders in order to provide consistency with the Instrument and Articles and Governance procedures. Changes were also proposed to some committee terms of reference. These represented changes recommended by committees, changes in line with the recommendations for item 9 below, and changes for the Audit Committee to bring it in line with the minimum terms of reference in the recently published Joint Audit Code of Practice (JACOP).

The Chair of the Audit Committee pointed out that reference should be made to Audit's oversight of risk, and for other committees the monitoring of risks allocated to them. He also

felt that the addition to the Audit Committee's responsibilities of 'efficient use of resources' would mean an unhelpful overlap with the responsibilities of the Finance & Resources Committee.

Governors **APPROVED** the recommended changes to the Standing Orders and committees terms of reference, with one exception, and with the proviso that a clause be added to the terms of reference of all committees regarding their responsibilities for risk management. The exception was that the Audit Committee's terms of reference were to include responsibility for 'efficient use of resources' only if the Internal Auditors confirmed that this was now mandatory under the JACOP.

Governors **APPROVED** the Committee Membership schedule for the year, having amended it to reflect that the Principal was a member of all committees except Audit and Remuneration, that Helen Walley was no longer a member, and that Stephan John and not Gordon Smith was the Chair of the Learning & Quality Committee.

9. POLICIES: Review of Policy Grid and Committee Ownership

The report was **RECEIVED**. The report proposed to streamline the review of policies. The DCE stated his intention to combine further policies and procedures in the future. However the COO reported that some policies in his area might be further disaggregated following audit recommendations.

The proposals were **APPROVED**. Where options had been given on which forums should 'own' policies these were allocated to the lowest level possible. Where there were options for equal level forums the Modernising Pay Policy and Performance Procedure was allocated to the Learning & Quality Committee, and the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policies were allocated to the Audit Committee. In addition the Student Visits and Residential Procedure was allocated to the Executive.

10 FINANCIAL MONITORING

The report was **RECEIVED**. The COO reported on the draft financial performance against budget and forecast for the year ended 31 July 2013. The accounts were currently being audited but he did not expect any major changes to the figures. There could be some changes not affecting income and expenditure. One outstanding issue was the re-valuation of fixed property assets.

The pre-FRS17 adjusted surplus on operations was £300k against a budget of £101k. This had allowed for payment of the staff bonus outlined in the Principal's Report (Agenda Item 5). The FRS17 adjustment created an accounting deficit but a favourable movement on the Balance Sheet. It did not affect the SFA Financial Health rating which was still 'good'.

The COO outlined a number of key variances against forecast. The estimated underlying position when non-recurring items were removed was a deficit of £34k. The Balance Sheet looked healthy. The rolling cash flow for the next twelve months assumed capital receipts for the Tower Block.

Governors asked if there were any provisions to be released in the current year. The COO replied that there were none available, and that there was now a significantly lower margin for error.

There followed a discussion about pension issues which were considered by all to be potentially significant. It was noted that the College was compelled by statute, while it remained a corporation, to use the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and the

Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS). The LGPS had a considerable deficit and the College might incur substantial costs in the long term. It was also noted that these pension arrangements were a prerequisite for attracting high quality staff to the College.

The Chair thanked the COO for the clarity of the report.

11 CONFIRMATION OF MEETING DATES

The dates were **RECEIVED**. It was **AGREED** that the Finance & Resources Committee meeting on 6 November should commence at 6pm, and that the Governors Development Day should take place on Tuesday 28 January 2014.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mentors had been allocated to new governors. It was noted that Tim Thirlwall, mentor for Trevor Morgan would be leaving the Board at the end of November and that another mentor would then be appointed for Mr Morgan.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 4 December 2013, 6pm

[Clerk's Note: the Clerk has moved the following item from the Part B to the Part A minutes. Original items remain confidential.]

14 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 3 JULY 2013

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

The meeting then ended at 8.50pm.