

PRESENT: Gordon Smith (Chair)
Caroline Allen (until end of item 8)
Ben Geeson
Kene Ibezi
Stephan John
Roz Liard
Clare Mackie
Anita McGowan
Alexander McGuigan
Trevor Morgan
Craig O'Donnell
Matthew Sims
Mariam Sow
Tim Thirlwall
Frances Wadsworth (Principal)
Kate Ward
Piers White (until end of item 14.2)

ATTENDING: Lance Allen (Observer, Chair of Worthing College)
Chay Champness (Chief Operating Officer - COO)
Ann Monaghan (Assistant Principal Curriculum Development & Quality - APCDQ)
Andy Smith (Deputy Chief Executive – DCE)
Jane Stroud (Clerk)

APOLOGIES: None

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 4 – The Learner Journey and Experience		
Improvements in Teaching and Learning Functional Skills	LQC	Through Report from Committee Chair
Agenda Item 7 – Self-Assessment Reports and Quality Improvement Plan		
Chair's Action to approve the final Self-Assessment Report	Chair of Governors	Through Matters Arising
Inconsistency in HE Outcomes	LQC	Through Report from Committee Chair

The Chair welcomed the newly elected HE Governor Alex McGuigan whose membership was **CONFIRMED** by the Governing Body. He also welcomed Matt Sims who was attending his first meeting, and Lance Allen, Chair of Worthing College who had been invited to observe the meeting.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No new declarations were made.

The Board **AGREED** that Tim Thirlwall's term of office should finish as at the end of the meeting. (There was some inconsistency in the records as to whether it finished at the end of November 2013 or on a December date).

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes were **agreed** and **signed** as a true record.

3.1 Matters Arising From These Minutes

Item 8.4 Annual Review of Governance Items: all committee terms of reference now included relevant clauses on risk management responsibilities. The Internal Auditors had confirmed that the Audit Committee terms of reference should retain reference to 'efficient use of resources', however the Audit Committee's Development Plan for the year included some formal meetings between the Chair of Audit and the Chair of F & P to discuss items of mutual interest.

3.2 Additional Report on Recent Decisions

This concerned decisions utilising the broad definition of meetings at 1(g) in the Instrument. There had been no decisions taken since taken since the Board meeting on 2 October 2013.

4 THE LEARNER JOURNEY AND EXPERIENCE

The presentation was **RECEIVED**. The APCDQ tabled a one page summary showing Areas for Improvement from the SAR, plans for the Autumn term and feedback / impact mechanisms. The most important areas for improvement were 'stretch and challenge' and English and maths. She also touched upon the development of Advanced Practitioners. It was essential to be able to measure if the quality improvement strategies were having an impact. The ways in which this was done were explored further in discussion with governors. Governors were particularly interested in how improvements in English and maths, embedded within the curriculum, were evidenced, and were told that they were explicitly part of quality feedback mechanisms. My Progress Tracker was being used increasingly well across the curriculum areas by both staff and students. The college had prioritised the development of English and maths skills for all learners and as part of this strategy recognised the importance of developing staff skills. As part of Staff Learning Day in November, those curriculum staff who did not have a current L2 English and/or maths qualification completed the college's Initial Assessments to ascertain their level. The minority of staff who did not achieve L2 (or higher) were now being supported through a range of developmental activities to enhance their skills working towards the achievement of L2 qualification. Governors were told that Functional Skills were a national issue, and a particular concern to employers. The College had been disappointed with last year's Functional Skills results, although they were above the national average they were still too low. Governors requested that improvements in teaching and learning Functional Skills be monitored by the Learning & Quality Committee.

5 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT ON PROGRESS IN IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING

The report was **RECEIVED**. The Principal highlighted the following:

1. The issue of sorting out the Data Service FIS database (a national issue) and hence the inability to report data was having a significant impact on operational effectiveness.
2. OFSTED had identified some emerging strengths at the College and these needed to be developed further. The absolute focus on teaching and learning in all agendas was helping.
3. Attendance and punctuality were key employability skills and a London issue, and were subject to a whole college approach.
4. The College had received positive feedback from employers on the Employability Strategy, to be formally launched in the New Year.
5. Work was being undertaken on the look and branding of the College to provide inspirational learning surroundings.
6. The outcome of strategic consultations would be brought to the Board January workshop.
7. College successes in World Skills, FE Awards and the launch of the Croydon School of Art were highlighted.
8. Finally, she touched on the Croydon Centre Development: Westfield/Hammerson £1bn plans that had just been approved and the impact this would have now and after 2018.

There followed a discussion about the Croydon Centre Development. Governors declared that it was important to take up opportunities afforded by the Westfield development from day 1. It was important to understand the Corporate Responsibility targets of the developers but the College also had a responsibility to influence their perceptions. The College should position itself at the right points in the development cycle to have most impact. It was suggested that lessons for employability, skills and training be learned from other developments such as Stratford and Leeds. Craig O'Donnell tabled a document by Land Securities: 'Trinity Leeds The Local Impact'. The Principal acknowledged the Board was fortunate to have Mr O'Donnell's expertise.

The Chair asked where the College was in terms of a journey from 1 to 10 in improving Teaching and Learning. Officers reported that there was progress and this was being monitored via a range of mechanisms with My Progress Tracker being the key tool for staff and students. Governors emphasised the need for consistent improvement. The APCDQ stated that the rate of improvement in 2012/13 was high, and that the College had reached an 8 or 9 in terms of progress against the plan for the year. However, the college ultimately will be measured against the Common Inspection Framework rather than its own 'internal' journey and so on this measure, the judgement would be 6 or 7 for 2012/13. The Principal commented on the much improved understanding and culture in the College relating to Teaching and Learning issues.

The Chair Elect of the Finance & Resources Committee asked about the impact of current student numbers on future funding. The Principal said that the Board Workshop in January would be an opportunity to review the College's strategy and future priorities.

6 KPIS & OVERVIEW

The report was **RECEIVED**. The DCE reported that Data Service issues as outlined above were causing difficulties in measuring performance in FE. HE numbers were expected to reach Full Time target in January. HE Part Time targets were down. In Table 5 the way in

which targets were set and reported had been changed. The percentage of observations measured as good and outstanding were to be measured in 2013/14 at the first observation not the last. The minimum percentage of Grade 4s at the end remained a target. Attendance and Punctuality had improved in October following an all College effort.

Governors commented on the good performance of sickness absence against benchmark and prior year. It was confirmed that sickness was now being reported via an in-house system that staff logged on to report sickness. The COO stated that the College was in the process of validating whether the system was being used properly.

Governors asked how the Teaching and Learning targets had been derived. Officers replied that they had been agreed at the LQC meeting in November, but that targets for 2014/15 would be set at the summer meeting of LQC.

The COO reported that figures in tables 7 – 9 for the period to the end of October were estimates because of the data problems. Aggregate staff efficiency figures for table 10 were not yet available, but this was being monitored at department level. The average event class size figures were impacted by the data problems but the estimates were close to the College's target.

The Chair Elect of the Finance & Resources Committee commented that the College may not be able to afford the benchmark figure of 12 per class. The COO said that the benchmark figure was three years old and might well change.

7 SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORTS AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

7.1 Self Assessment Report 2012/13

The SAR was **RECEIVED**. It was noted that it had been through a detailed validation process. The DCE stated that there were four grades and that Teaching and Learning could be a limiting grade.

Outcomes for Learners had been self-assessed as Grade 3. There had been a significant improvement in overall Long targets, although they were still just below the national average for 2011/12. There had been a similar improvement in Employer Responsive outcomes. Functional Skills outcomes had improved and were doing well against the poor London average. OFSTED had commended the development of personal and social skills in students. Officers explained the reasons for the proposed grade being a 3 rather than a 2 and this centred on the importance of both 'raw outcomes' and progress measures being considered. The Common Inspection Framework places significant emphasis on progress and progression and so value added measures are critical to our judgements. Current reports on value added (ALIS and the L3 Value Added Tracker) show progress broadly in line with expectations rather than positive.

Teaching and Learning had been self-assessed as a Grade 2. OFSTED had confirmed the College's judgements on practice and in relation to action plans after observation. The use of ILT (Information and Learning Technology) was strong, but more needed to be done to stretch and challenge students. Assessment procedures had strengthened considerably. The enrichment programme was strong but the students' experience and the skills they develop through the programme must be captured in their CVs, personal statements and letters of application to employers. IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) was getting learners onto the right courses. He emphasised that Teaching and Learning are critical to improving student success and progression and that the profile reflects significant improvement over the course of the year but the priority is to increase the number and proportion of outstanding lessons and eradicate inadequate lessons. MyProgress Tracker has been introduced in 2013/2014 as a response to the OFSTED inspection report, and to

provide a single ILP (Individualised Learning Plan) and record of students' assessments. Adoption by both students and staff has been good and the development of practice is being actively managed.

Leadership and Management was self-assessed as a Grade 2 given the significant progress made in terms of Teaching and Learning and students' success rates.. Few colleges achieved the improvement rate that Croydon had, but few started from such a low base. The grade would be strengthened by a good Teaching and Learning grade. Community and partnership work was a strength. Arrangements for Safeguarding were 'good' or 'outstanding' as validated by external audits and the local authority. The College now wanted to see learners confident in progressing to the next level.

Overall Effectiveness had been self-assessed as a Grade 2. This depended upon Teaching, Learning and Assessment, a level of consistency throughout, and leadership at all different levels.

The following points were made in discussion:

1. Governors wanted to know what the College needed to do to improve from an overall Grade 2 to a 1. Officers confirmed that the steps for ongoing improvement were outlined in the Quality Improvement Plan and further consideration would be given at the Governors' Development Day in January as to the journey to Outstanding.
2. Governors were concerned about students failing to meet entry requirements and what happened to them. Officers said that numbers were still being analysed, but that this year some students had not got onto the next level because they had not achieved or because they were lacking in some other criteria. Stricter entry criteria were being enforced, and the only way to increase market share was to increase reputation. The College was working on bridging the different levels, but had to be careful about spreading and differentiating the offer or it would become inefficient.
3. The APCDQ stated that sections in the report on Value Added, Safeguarding and Disadvantage were still in progress. Governors stressed the need to improve evidence of impact for Safeguarding. Inconsistency in reporting on Equality and Diversity in paragraphs 3.2.7 and 3.3.5 were pointed out and the APCDQ agreed to address this in the final version. Governors also commented that 3.2.5 on Functional Skills seemed to be more focused on Teaching than Learning, and this would also be amended.
4. The new Chair of Audit (see item 14 below) asked to be shown MyProgress Tracker as it was so significant in providing data and the APCDQ agreed to show it to him.

The SAR was then **APPROVED** for submission to the SFA portal, subject to **CHAIR'S ACTION** to agree the final version.

7.2 QIP 2012/13, and 7.3 QIP 2013/14

The reports were **RECEIVED**. The Principal reported that OFSTED had applauded the clarity of the themes identified for 2012/13. These were further developed in the 2013/14 QIP. In response to a question she confirmed to governors that the QIP addressed all the weaknesses in the previous OFSTED inspection.

The outcomes of the QIP 2012/13 were reviewed and **APPROVED**, and the proposed QIP for 2013/14 was **APPROVED** as a work in progress.

7.4 AMR: Self-Assessment of Higher Education Provision and Action Plan

The report was **RECEIVED**. The DCE informed governors of the impending QAA review in April 2014 and the work that would be needed for this. The key points in the AMR were that success rates had increased from 73% to 75%, but there was no national average to make a

comparison with. There was an issue with the variation in success rates between qualifications. 85% of lessons observed were good or outstanding. Internal surveys show 88% student satisfaction while the external National Student Survey (NSS) showed 75%. There was work to be done on ensuring that students understood the NSS, but also on following up issues raised by students during the year. The low rate of retention from the first year was a concern.

The following points were made in discussion:

1. The variation in success rates was seen as unusual. Governors wondered if this was due to large class sizes, but class sizes were higher in colleges generally than in universities. Governors endorsed plans to tackle the inconsistency.
2. The shortage of Part Time students was a challenge. This was a national issue and perceived to be due to funding policy.
3. There was concern that retention problems in the first year would be carried forward to the second year. On the other hand the College should be committed to taking students through HE as far as they were personally able to go. It was noted that three courses had been issued with NTIs (notice to improve).
4. Governors requested that the table on page 82 include a column for numbers of students.
5. Governors asked why there were so many more women than men on courses. They were told that typically it was women who made significant progression from Access to HE courses. Governors requested that the College ensure that men could take up development opportunities.

The AMR was **APPROVED**.

9 THE LEARNERS' EXPERIENCE: STUDENT GOVERNORS' REPORT

A written report was **RECEIVED**. The HE Student Governor highlighted the immediate response by students to the Philippines typhoon, anti-bullying initiatives, UNICEF activities, and the first ever HE Freshers Fair. The FE Student Governor highlighted the first meeting of the Student Parliament, competitions to help families in need, and the use of the Faith prayer room.

Governors thanked the student governors for their report, and welcomed the new Freshers Fair in particular. They offered to give the Student Governors useful local introductions, and some contact details were exchanged.

8 GOVERNANCE SELF ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

The report was **RECEIVED**. The Chair asked members to consider if the self-assessment document reflected their discussions at the self-assessment workshop, and whether the overall description was accurate. Members asked that the Board's evaluation processes, including 'one to one's', be mentioned as a strength. It was also suggested that more on-line training, and use of AoC briefings be considered by the Search and Governance Development Committee in January for inclusion in the Governance QIP.

The Governance Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Priorities were **APPROVED** with the provisos given above.

10 FINANCIAL MONITORING

The report was **RECEIVED**. The COO reported that the current position was favourable compared to budget but there were a number of income assumptions given the absence of

the SFA funding software availability. The Forecast would be adjusted from January however there were some emerging key adverse variances which were set out in paragraph 2. From this he highlighted the following:

1. The in-year SFA 19+ funding variance could be mitigated by partnership work but at a cost of 80% which would need to be found in-year.
2. 16 – 18 apprenticeship recruitment was expected to generate £427k, circa £400k below budget.
3. A large number of 24+ learners did not now appear to be eligible for loans. The worst case variance was £150k.
4. The HE full-time recruitment numbers are below budget due to retention but there is an opportunity for further recruitment in January. Part-time recruitment is significantly behind budget.

The DCE noted out that FE learners dropping out after the census date would affect success rates.

The College would be able to compensate for some negative financial factors but this would be challenging in an OFSTED inspection year. The cash flow on page 111 showed receipts from the expected sale of the Tower Block. The College was in negotiation with the SFA about the portion of the capital receipts from the Tower Block that could be used for revenue purposes.

The Principal pointed out that the College would continue to consider the possibility of a pay award and implementation of the London living wage. The UCU (University and College Union) were looking for a 5% increase in pay, and 60 staff had taken part in a national strike on 3 December.

The Chair commented that it was indeed a challenging year.

11 RISK MANAGEMENT

The report was **RECEIVED**. The COO pointed out that the key changes were in OP91 and ST5. OP91 failure to comply with legislation: it was now felt that this should always be a '2'. ST5 Data ownership, compliance and understanding of impact: it was felt that recent performance against compliance requirements had fallen short of expectations and that therefore the net risk had increased. Action plans were in place to address the shortfall.

12 AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Audit Committee Annual Report was received from the Chair of the Audit Committee. He pointed out the opinion of the Internal Audit Service on page 148 and the Committee's own opinion on page 151 which enabled the Financial Statements to be signed. He highlighted that following the merger of Baker Tilly and RSM Tenon the Audit Committee had decided to go out to tender for the Internal Audit Service.

The following were **APPROVED**:

1. The Audit Committee Annual Report, incorporating the Internal Audit Annual Report, the Financial Statements Audit Management Letter, and the Annual Report on Risk Management.
2. The re-appointment of Baker Tilly as Financial Statements Auditors for 2013/14.
3. The re-appointment of Baker Tilly (formerly RSM Tenon) as the Internal Audit Service for the period until April 2014.

13 ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, PLUS LETTER OF REPRESENTATION FOR SIGNATURE

The Report and Financial Statements were **RECEIVED**. The COO noted that these had been reviewed by the Audit Committee and the Finance & Resources Committee. Page 213 showed a deficit of £309k following a £600k FRS17 adjustment. Thus there was an underlying surplus despite challenges to income. 2013/14 was likely to be less flexible.

The Annual Report and Financial Statements were **APPROVED**. It was **RESOLVED** that the Chair of Governors and the Principal should sign the Letter of Representation.

14 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

14.1 Learning & Quality Committee 27 November 2013

An oral report was **RECEIVED** as the meeting had taken place the previous week. The Chair of the Committee highlighted the increase in the target for long level success rates from 83% to 84%, and the change in the basis of the Teaching and Learning target of 73% - this now applied to first observations as reported in item 6 above. Other items had been addressed further up this agenda.

14.2 Finance & Resources Committee 6 November 2013

The minutes were **RECEIVED**. The Chair of the Committee highlighted the interesting presentation received on International Development, and that the key changes proposed for the Financial Regulations related to the anti-fraud and anti-bribery annex. The COO pointed out that a paragraph had been inserted on page 287 expressly stating that limits are for aggregate spend. He further pointed out that on page 299 the external auditor would be replaced by the Chair of Governors and the Chair of Audit as persons to go to with whistleblowing and fraud disclosures. This followed a concern about conflict of interest by Baker Tilly and would be reflected in the published version. The Chair of the Committee went on to report that the Committee had approved updates to HR procedures, UCC tuition fees and incentives for students, and had elected Trevor Morgan as Vice Chair of the Committee.

The updated Financial Regulations were **APPROVED** and it was **NOTED** that there had been no revisions to the Budget at this point.

14.3 Audit Committee 13 November 2013

The Minutes were **RECEIVED** Craig O'Donnell introduced the minutes and reports for approval. Stephan John noted that the Audit Committee now had the power to flex procedures.

The following items were **APPROVED**: Internal Audit Plan until April 2014, and the Annual Report on Fraud.

14.4 Governor Reports on Non Committee Items

1. Craig O'Donnell was **APPOINTED** as Chair of the Audit Committee.
2. The transfer of Kate Ward from the Audit and the LQC committees to the F & R, the Search and Governance Development and the Remuneration committees was **APPROVED**.
3. An oral report was **RECEIVED** from Kate Ward on a Learning Walk in the Construction Department the previous Monday. She had been very impressed by the facilities and by the way teachers made changes to meet industry needs. Students were 'buzzing', but recruitment of teachers was a problem.
4. The Chair informed governors that Roz Liard had resigned as a governor with effect from February and that a replacement would be sought. A replacement for Tim Thirlwall's role as Health & Safety Governor would also be required.

5. The Chair also informed governors that he would be meeting with the Vice Chair, the Committee Chairs, the Clerk and key officers in the New Year to look at streamlining Board business. Governors commented that progress had been made in this area over a number of years.

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked Tim Thirlwall for his services as a governor. He commented on his professionalism, commitment and attention to detail, and particularly commended his chairmanship of the Capital Projects Working Group.

The Clerk noted that a replacement mentor was required for Trevor Morgan with Tim's departure. She also reported that the Chair of the LQC Committee had agreed to act as mentor for the two student governors. The other two mentors currently in place were Roz Liard for Matt Sims, and Piers White for Craig O'Donnell.

16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 5 February 2014. In a departure from the printed agenda it was **AGREED** that the meeting would not be preceded by a workshop, but that a presentation on an aspect of Teaching, Learning and Assessment would be included within the formal meeting.

Members were also reminded that there would be a Governors Development Day on Tuesday 28 January 2014 at Epsom Racecourse.

The meeting then ended at 8.40pm.