

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
3 DECEMBER 2014

MINUTES

PRESENT:	Gordon Smith (Chair) Claire Mackie Anita McGowan (staff governor) Trevor Morgan Craig O'Donnell Nulu Okuku (student governor) Francis Uwagboe (student governor) Frances Wadsworth (Principal) Piers White Jackie Wilding
ALSO ATTENDING:	Keith Oxspring (Chief Operating Officer -COO) Andy Smith (Deputy Chief Executive)
CLERK:	Melissa Drayson
APOLOGIES	Caroline Allen Matt Sims Stephan John Kate Ward
QUORUM	The meeting was quorate throughout
TIMING	6.00 – 8.50pm

Item no.		Action Lead
	Chair's Introduction	
	The Chair welcomed Nulu Okuku (HE Student Governor) to her first Board of Governors meeting. Nulu is a second year student studying Public Health and Social Care.	
14.1	i. Apologies for absence	
	Apologies were received from those listed above.	
	ii. Declaration of interests	
	No declarations were made in relation to any item on the agenda.	
	iii. Minutes of the meeting on 1 October 2014	
	The minutes were approved as an accurate and fair record and were signed by the Chair	

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iv Matters Arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

There were no matters arising

14.7 EVALUATION OF STANDARDS

i. Principal's Report on Progress on Improving Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Supporting paper by the Principal and Chief Executive

Key headlines were report:

Ofsted update:

The Principal briefed the Board on the Ofsted consultation on the new Common Inspection Framework. Concern was expressed in particular that Ofsted propose to continue to give L and M grades without assessment of a college's financial position or sustainability. Reverting to a system with a parallel financial assessment was considered a more appropriate approach and would form part of the college's response to consultation. An update was given on recent Ofsted inspection outcomes, and FE Commissioner assessments, visits and priorities.

It was acknowledged that it was currently an extremely challenging time for the FE Sector, with significant numbers of colleges in serious financial difficulty.

Enrolment

An overview of enrolment was given, but it was noted that a full report had been provided to, and discussed with, the Learning and Quality Committee. Student numbers had dropped significantly in some areas in the first 42 days, which was a concern. Construction, Building and Health and Social Care were areas being investigated further.

There was a need to ensure that students were inducted and made to feel part of the Croydon College 'family' quickly in order to retain them as well as ensuring that students were on the right course. The Student Governors made the point that student-led support and activities were an important part of this process.

The Board was assured that partnerships were being established with organisations where the quality was assured and in areas which reflected the Strategic Plan. Partnerships were being engaged where there was a shortfall on targets, but only where this made strategic sense.

Pay Award

The proposal to ensure that the pay of the lowest paid members of staff was in line with London living wage, had been supported by the F&R Committee. The implementation of the annual pay award

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would be reviewed later in the year in the light of the college financial position. In the meantime, in order to thank staff for the continued good progress of the college, a one-off increase to staff annual leave by two days was proposed. It was confirmed to the Board that this was affordable

RESOLVED: that the proposal to increase staff annual leave by two days, pro-rata'd for part-time staff, be APPROVED.

Employability partnerships

The Board sought feedback from the Student Governors on the current range of employability schemes for students. The FE Student Governor reported very positively on his current placement at Crystal Palace Football Club. Not only was he gaining valuable work experience, but had benefited from the mutual support arising from being part of a team of students.

It was reported that the Learning and Quality Committee had requested more specific targets relating to employer partnerships in the QIP.

Other partnerships providing employment opportunities were Gatwick Airport and Macdonalds. Discussions had also been held with Lee Stafford, celebrity hairdresser, to develop a partnership in connection with the capital bid.

Property

The deadline for the submission of the detailed bid was 31 January 2015. Members were informed that a special Board meeting would be held at the end of the Development Day, which would allow discussion of the detail and sharing of ideas. It was confirmed that the cost should come in well within the approved £30k budget.

AGREED: that a special Board of Governors meeting would be held on Tuesday 27 January, after the Board Development Day..

Clerk

ii. Self-Assessment Report 2013-14 *Executive Summary presented by the Deputy Chief Executive*

The minutes of the previous week's Learning and Quality Committee meeting were tabled. The full self-assessment report had been discussed in detail by the committee. In summary, it was reported that the proposed grades mirrored the June 14 Ofsted outcomes. The proposed Grade 3 for Outcomes for Learners reflected the fact that, although success rates had shown steady improvement, they were now at the national average. They would need to be at least 3% above this benchmark to achieve a Good. Similarly, in terms of value-added, the college had improved from negative position but there was still some way to go.

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The Board was made aware of the possibility that the college would not meet the SFA's minimum floor targets for Maths Functional Skills. This was reported to be an issue for colleges across the sector.

It was agreed that all Governors would be provided with a link to the full SAR by email.

RESOLVED: that the College Self-Assessment Report be approved with the following grades:

Overall Effectiveness: 2

Quality of Teaching and Learning: 2

Effectiveness of Leadership and management: 2

Outcomes for Learners: 3

DCE

iii. Learning and Quality Committee Report

Unapproved Minutes of the meeting on 26 November – tabled

The LQC meeting had been chaired by the Chair of the Board in the absence of the Committee Chair. The recommendation that the QIP and 14-15 targets be approved was considered but it was considered more appropriate to defer approval until after SFA had provided its final report on learner outcomes for 13-14.

There was a discussion about the most appropriate committee for discussion about learner number information. It was:

Agreed: that the Learning and Quality Committee would consider reports on recruitment and marketing, and the Finance and Resources Committee would monitor learner numbers in terms of financial consequences.

iv. The Learner Experience – Student Governors' Reports

Oral reports by the Student Governors

The FE Student Governor reported that:

- Elections had been held for course representatives, Student Parliament and Unicef representatives. There had been a high level of engagement from students. Care had been taken to ensure that the election was conducted with as much transparency as possible
- Training had been provided for reps in problem solving and public speaking. Opportunities had also been provided to take part in mock interviews. Feedback from students suggested that these activities had helped to make students feel more confident in terms of speaking to potential employers
- The College would be entering a Food Trolley competition.

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Governors were asked to get involved by contributing either items for the trolley or money.

- A range of activities had been run for Anti-Bullying week to raise awareness of the issue both within college and in the wider world. More than 200 students had taken part in a survey.
- A student colleague who was leading on the LGBT project had been interviewed by Gay Pride magazine, talking particularly about his voluntary activities and work tackling homophobic bullying and hate crime
- A group of students had met a delegation of Chinese Principals and told them about their voluntary activities. The Principal fed back how impressed the Chinese Principals had been
- 130 students were working on Open Badges, earned through engaging in different voluntary activities which would develop a range of skills and increase employability

The HE Student Governor spoke about the benefits of work placements and volunteering in terms of making students aware of a broader range of career opportunities after leaving college. Instilling a culture of volunteering and social responsibility had also been beneficial, and the help of teaching staff in supporting students to seek opportunities was appreciated.

The Principal and Deputy Chief Executive reported that the Student Parliament debate had been at a high level, and that the meeting had been purposeful and constructive. The focus had been on the contribution that students could make to resolving issues and improving the college.

It was noted that Liaison Groups worked in parallel to the Student Parliament, allowing course specific issues to be raised at School level. Principal and student lunches were also held once a term, with discussion planned to track the students through their journey at the college.

It was agreed that governors should be encouraged to participate in various student engagement and student voice activities.

AGREED:

- (i) **That the Student Voice structure diagram should be circulated to all governors, along with dates for the Student Parliament meetings for the year.**

Clerk

14.8 BUSINESS PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

i. Free School Update

Oral report

The submission of the application was discussed and noted that if successful the next stage would be an interview to be held in January. If not successful in this round, it was now understood that there would be another application round in April 2015.

Some initial discussions had been held between the Chair, Principal, Chair of F&R and Clerk about exploring alternative governance structures. Further research would be undertaken and feedback provided to the Board.

Other school developments within the Borough were discussed. At present there was a surplus of secondary school places but this situation was expected to reverse by 2018, when there would be a shortfall.

ii. Risk Register and Risk Management

Supporting paper: Re-worked Risk Register

The new format of the risk register was commended. Input had been provided by the Internal Auditors, BDO and the Clerk.

Clerk/Chair

There was support among Governors for a discussion about the Board's risk appetite, and it was considered that this might be a useful discussion at the Board Development Day on 27 January.

iii. Annual Report and Financial Statements

Supporting paper jointly recommended by the F&R and Audit Committees

It was reported that both the Finance and Resources Committee had scrutinised the accounts thoroughly and were satisfied that they were an accurate reflection of the financial position. The Audit Committee had received the External Audit report .

RESOLVED: that the Annual Report and Financial Statements be APPROVED.

iv. Finance and Resources Committee Report

*Minutes of the F&R meeting on 5 November
September 2014 Management accounts tabled*

Attention was drawn to the HE Fees item, and there was a detailed discussion about the rationale for maintaining fees at the current level of £6000. This would be the fourth year that fees had been held at this level in spite of inflation. Although a higher fee would open up the opportunity to offer bursaries back to some students, possibly linked to attendance, the concern was expressed that higher fees would affect recruitment. Croydon was the only college to have met its Student number control level.

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The timescales were such that, if a higher fee was to be charged for 2016-17, this would need to be decided in the next couple of months.

AGREED:

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| <p>(i) That a wider discussion on the HE Strategy should be held at the Board Development Day on 27 January, including a sensitivity and scenario analysis</p> | <p>DCE</p> |
| <p>(ii) That University of Sussex research on student fees would be shared with the DCE</p> | <p>Claire Mackie</p> |
| <p>(iii) That some market research should be undertaken among existing HE students, to evaluate the possible impact of higher fees on recruitment and curriculum choice</p> | |

The key issues from the September management accounts were as set out in the minutes of the meeting. These represented a very early indication of financial position. It was expected that the impact of cost-saving measures earlier in the year would begin to bear fruit in the accounts soon.

From now on, monthly accounts would be shared by the Chief Operating Officer with the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee prior to their circulation to the wider Board.

AGREED: that the October management accounts would be circulated to all governors when finalised. **COO/
Chair F&R**

The remaining recommendations from the F&R Committee meeting were considered and it was **RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the pay of lower paid staff be addressed to bring it in line with the London living wage, but that any further staff pay award be deferred at this stage, with further reflection should funds become available
- (ii) To approve the following HE Fees:
 - a. To continue with the ABB Bursary for 15-16
 - b. To discontinue the iPad Bursary
 - c. To retain current fee levels of £6000 per annum
 - d. To retain current fee levels for part time courses
- (iii) To approve the Financial Regulations 2014-15
- (iv) To adopt minor revisions to the Supply Chain Charges and Fees policy.

v. Audit Committee Report
Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting on 12 November
Annual report of the Audit Committee to the Board

The minutes of the Committee meeting were noted. The general

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observation was made that BDO had made a strong start, were adding value and producing clear and high quality reports.

It was reported that there had been a discussion about the word 'generally' into the Statement of Internal Control in the Audit Committee Annual Report to the Board.

NB: subsequent to the Board meeting, advice was received from BDO that it would not be appropriate to include this wording.

RESOLVED: that the Annual Report of the Audit Committee to the Board of Governors 2013-14 be APPROVED.

14.9 GOVERNANCE ISSUES

i. Appointments/reappointments to the Board

Oral report by the Chair of Search and Governance Committee

Governors were reminded that it had been decided to recruit an individual with strategic Human Resources experience to fill the vacancy on the Board. Colleagues were thanked for putting forward names of potential candidates. Three people had been interviewed but no appointment made. Although well qualified and experienced at a management level, none of the candidates was felt to have the high level experience that the Board required.

The skills needs of the Board would now be reviewed in the context of the changing FE landscape and the new challenges for the College. This would also tie in with the research on alternative governance structures, as indicated earlier in the meeting.

The discussion would be continued at the Search and Governance Committee meeting on 14 January.

ii. Search and Governance Committee Report

Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting on 13 October 2014

The remaining discussion at the Search and Governance Committee meeting was noted. There were no recommendations

iii. Governance Self-Assessment Report and action plan

Supporting paper – tabled by the Clerk

The clerk presented the headlines from the self-assessment exercise and a draft Quality Improvement Plan. This would be developed more fully and signed off by the Search and Governance Committee at its January meeting. In the meantime, Governors were asked to email feedback to the Clerk.

iv. Governor reports on non-committee actions

Oral reports by governors

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The Chair reported on his attendance at the AOC conference, which he and the Principal had attended. The central message to come from the event was that the financial challenges for colleges were likely to continue and intensify.

Governors who had attended the FE Awards event reported on a very successful and enjoyable evening.

v. Chairs Action report
Oral report by the Chair

There were no reports

14.10 Other business

There were no items of urgent other business.

Members were reminded that the Chef's restaurant had been booked for the Governors' Christmas Dinner at 6.00pm on Tuesday 16th December and it was hoped that all would be able to attend.

Signed _____ (Chair)

Date: _____