

# CORPORATION BOARD MEETING

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation Board held at the Abingdon campus on  
Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009 at 6.00pm

**Present:** John Raftery (Chair)      Neil Monaghan      **In attendance:** Di Batchelor  
Carol Baker                              David Quayle              Miranda Coles  
Stephen Dexter                          Robin Smith              Mike Gaston  
David Doughty                          Terry Stock              Sue Webb  
Sylvia Doyle                                                           David Bramble (Clerk)  
Barbara Harker  
Bruce Hunt  
John Kanimba  
Teresa Kelly (Principal)

## Action

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Russell Paul and Steve Billcliffe. Di Batchelor had apologised for not being present at the start of the meeting.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

John Raftery declared an interest as pro Vice Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University, an institution which had Higher Education partnership agreements with the College.

Terry Stock declared an interest as Chair of Connexions in relation to NEETs at Carterton item 5.3

Carol Baker, Di Batchelor, Miranda Coles, Mike Gaston and Sue Webb declared an interest as members of staff in Item 18 Pay Award.

Teresa Kelly and David Bramble declared an interest as senior postholders in item 17 Remuneration Committee.

### 3. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 16<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2009 AND 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009

The minutes of the meetings held on 16<sup>th</sup> July and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2009 were approved.

### 4. MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

### 5. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

#### 5.1 Overview

Teresa Kelly was pleased to report that overall the College was in robust good health. The end of year accounts for 2008/09 showed a healthy position with regard to core operations. There was a major increase in 16-18 recruitment, the expected decrease in adult recruitment had not materialised and there were increases in T2G and Apprenticeship provision. Most importantly, retention, the key indicator of whether or not our students were satisfied, remained high and well above the sector averages. The 2008/09 Self Assessment report showed a

college that had improved to an overall 'good' rating with some outstanding features. As the College moved through a period of uncertainty and change, the priority would be to stay focused on teaching and learning and success of our students in order to achieve the 2012 goal.

## **5.2 The Abingdon Partnership**

In the light of significant government changes and the emphasis on Partnership working, the Chairs of the four institutions had been meeting to discuss the future direction of the Partnership. A proposed vision and future goals had been formulated and each of the Governing Bodies were being asked to endorse the following statements:

- To have four outstanding establishments (Ofsted rated)
- To automatically share best practice such that the consortia have a record for increasing the pace of improvement
- To have common practices in engaging with the community
- To have a clear and unique ethos for each establishment
- The local community would be aware of the contribution the Partnership made and was always prepared to support Partnership initiatives.

The Abingdon Partnership Vision and Goals were endorsed.

## **5.3 Carterton Community College**

The developments at RAF Brize Norton entailing a temporary relocation of staff for the next three years, had resulted in a 50% reduction in the school roll. The Local Authority (LA) was seeking solutions that would enable the secondary and primary schools to be maintained during a major house building programme. One element of a solution could be to significantly increase the volume of 16-19 year olds choosing to take-up education and training in Carterton using the school as the base. A significant proportion of the county's NEET's group come from Carterton.

There was support for the commissioning of an options appraisal for school and post 16 provision in Carterton. This feasibility study would be commissioned jointly by the school and the College and, hopefully, funded by LSC, DCSF and the LA.

The Board approved the commissioning of a joint feasibility study/options appraisal.

## **5.4 Oakley College**

Oakley College, providing specialist facilities for 15 learners with highly complex behaviour, currently operated from rented accommodation the lease for which expired in July 2010. The strategy for the relocation was linked to the submission of the Abingdon AiP. The collapse of the Capital Programme had removed this option in the short to medium term. The LSC had been unable to fund the £700k required for relocation but had awarded £200k towards relocation costs. The College was working with OCC and MacIntyre to identify suitable accommodation to lease for approximately three years thereby securing this provision in the medium term.

## **5.5. National Star Award**

Maggie Harnew, an hourly paid lecturer, had been named as the outright winner of the National Star Award for outstanding contribution in the field of Skills for Life. She had pioneered a very successful learning resource website.

The Corporation Board wished to congratulate her on this outstanding achievement.

## **5.6 RIDDOR Reportable Incidents**

There had been two reportable accidents since the Principal's last report.

## **5.6 Potential HR Liabilities**

There were no outstanding HR liabilities.

The Principal's report was received and noted.

# **6. PROPERTY STRATEGY**

## **6.1 Witney Re-development Project**

Sue Webb reported that following the direction agreed at the strategy meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> September, a business case for a smaller development at an estimated cost of £14.5m had been prepared. As the affordability level had been assessed at £9.5m, progress on such a scheme would depend on a grant of £5m from the LSC or other third parties. Verbal support from West Oxfordshire County Council regarding planning issues and the assurance of financial support from potential lenders had been obtained.

A meeting with LSC Regional advisers was held on 11 November. Approval was given for the College to develop any scheme without reliance on a grant from LSC. This was subsequently confirmed, in writing, by the Director, LSC National Capital Projects. The allocation of £200m for FE capital projects had not been finally approved at Ministerial level and the criteria for selection had not been announced. Decisions may be forthcoming after the National meeting on 9 December.

Work on an alternative scheme had started and it was clear that a good learning and teaching area of 6,500m<sup>2</sup> was feasible with a frontage on Welch Way and the re-opening of a newly refurbished A block. Sue Webb stressed that Option 2 was not a smaller version of the original design.

Robin Smith urged that future technological developments which may reduce the requirements for teaching accommodation were taken into consideration e.g. lectures on line. Neil Monaghan emphasised the need to concentrate on a sustainable, fit for purpose, development which would cover medium term needs.

Terry Stock reminded the meeting that just one year ago the College was being encouraged to bring forward proposals for the Abingdon site and there was a high expectation that the £30m Witney redevelopment would go ahead with a LSC grant of 87%. The College was now faced with more work and costs on a greatly reduced scheme with the prospect of no LSC grant. Further consideration to the overall strategy for the College would also be required.

John Raftery thought it was an opportune time to consider making the existing Estates Strategy Steering Group into a full Committee of the Corporation Board. In the immediate future, monthly meetings would be required with minutes being circulated to all governors and there should be a wider governor representation. Terms of reference needed to be approved at the next meeting and these should state delegated powers.

**Sue  
Webb**

## 6.2 Temporary Accommodation

The Board was reminded that in early October approval was sought, out of committee, for the purchase of the temporary accommodation currently leased and in use at the Witney site, at a cost not exceeding £1m. This was approved and at the Finance & Employment Committee meeting of 26 November 2009 the purchase was re-considered and it was agreed to recommend to the Board that the temporary accommodation should be bought outright prior to 31 December 2009 so as to avoid the return of the rate of VAT to 17½%. Ratification of this decision was required together with approval for borrowing of £998k for the purchase of the temporary units. In answer to questions, Miranda Coles advised that, at this particular juncture, it was in the best interests of the College to borrow the money rather than significantly reduce the healthy cash in hand position as the financial ratios would fall. LSC had concurred with this thinking and had suggested a four or five year term.

## 6.3 Abingdon

The major concern was the relocation of Oakley College which was covered in Minute 5.4 above.

## 6.4 Decisions

The Board noted the progress to date on the Witney project business case and endorsed the Steering Group's recommendation to continue with the development of the two options presented in the paper.

The Board noted the situation regarding the Abingdon campus and the possible relocation of Oakley College.

**Resolved to:** approve the purchase of the temporary accommodation at the Witney campus for the sum of £998k (nine hundred and ninety eight thousand pounds).

**Resolved to:** approve borrowing to a maximum limit of £1m in order to purchase the temporary accommodation units.

**Resolved to:** approve the formation of an Estates Strategy Committee to replace the present Steering Group.

## 7. FINANCIAL MATTERS

### 7.1 Internal Audit Annual Report 2008 – 09

Following the recommendation of the Audit Committee, it was

**Resolved to:** approve the Internal Audit Annual Report 2008 - 09

### 7.2 Audit Committee Annual Report

**Resolved to:** approve the Audit Committee Annual Report 2008–09

### 7.3 College Year End Accounts 2008–09

Stephen Dexter drew attention to the unqualified opinion in respect of the financial statements and regularity audit. No material weaknesses in the accounting and internal control systems had been identified. It was a compliment to Miranda Coles and her finance team that there were no material misstatements which required subsequent adjustment by the auditors.

All expenditure on the Witney redevelopment project had been written-off in the last two years. A conservative approach had been taken and no professional fees had been capitalised.

Stephen Dexter pointed out a change to last year's financial statements in Note 6. It had been thought appropriate to disclose the small amounts for reimbursement of travel and subsistence paid to governors.

**Resolved to:** approve the financial statements for year ended 31 July 2009 and authorise the signing of the Letter of Representation by the Chair.

#### **7.4 Financial Management & Control Evaluation Report 2008/09**

Miranda Coles reminded governors of the procedures to be followed and advised that the joint meeting of the Audit and Finance Committees had reviewed the document and approved the gradings. The deficit following write-off of the Witney capital development costs made it difficult to consider 'outstanding' grades and 'good' had been awarded throughout. The Board confirmed agreement to the award of an overall 'good' and 'good' for all sections.

#### **7.5 Management Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2009**

The significant points of the management accounts were highlighted by Miranda Coles. The draft ratio analysis was now in use to conform with the requirements of the Framework for Excellence. The financial health grade was 'Good' and it was anticipated that this position would be the position at the end of the year. LSC recurrent grant income for 16-19 responsive and adult income were on target. Work based learning was the cause of slight concern. Expenditure was generally in line with estimates. Pension provision of £300k had been budgeted. The cash flow forecast assumed payment of the temporary accommodation at the Witney campus in December 2009.

**Resolved to:** approve the management accounts to 31 October 2009.

#### **7.6 Tuition Fee Policy 2010/11**

Miranda Coles explained that the LSC target for 2010/11 was that the assumed fee element on supported courses would be 50% and participants in non-LSC funded courses would be expected to pay the full costs.

Proposals for 2010/11 were:

- Full-time fees - an increase of 12% to £1,110
- Rate per guided learning hour - to remain at £3.60 per hour
- Overseas Students' Fees - an increase of 3%

**Resolved to:** approve the proposed fees for 2010/11

### **8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

#### **8.1 Risk Management Policy**

Stephen Dexter reported that the Audit Committee had reviewed the updated Risk Management Policy and recommended that it should be approved by the Board. It had been noted that further embedding at lower management levels was probably still required.

**Resolved to:** approve the Risk Management Policy document.

## **8.2 College Risk Report**

Stephen Dexter advised that the report submitted to governors listed high level risks and those which had moved significantly. The position at December 2009 was reviewed. Robin Smith queried what happened when a score passed mitigation. Teresa Kelly explained that the Risk Report was reviewed weekly by SMT who would take appropriate action if an issue arose.

**Resolved to:** approve the Risk Management Report.

## **9. VICE PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

Mike Gaston reminded governors that a detailed report was submitted to the Finance and Performance Committees on progress towards reaching LSC funding and number targets. This report provided a key summary of progress against targets, including franchise provision, and highlighted activities and developments within the curriculum.

### **9.1 LSC Contracts 2008/09**

Funding targets for 16-19 were exceeded and the revised target for 19+ was achieved.

### **9.2 LSC Contracts 2009/10**

It was disappointing to report that the College's improved success rates for 2008/09 will not be recognised by the Young Peoples Learning Agency (YPLA) as the 'provider factor' used for calculating 2010/11 funding would be based on 2007/08 success rates.

In the current year, it seemed highly likely that there would be an over delivery of 16-19 provision with a risk in relation to costs incurred. Adult responsive data indicated that targets would be achieved.

### **9.3 14-19 Responsive**

The partnership with Carterton Community College had been strengthened by the additional provision of Media. It was hoped to add warehousing, logistics and construction skills in 2010/11. A close dialogue continued with the Local Authority to ensure a widening vocational offer in this part of West Oxfordshire.

The following Diploma courses were on offer by the Abingdon Partnership:

- Engineering at level 1 for 14-16 solely at the College
- Creative and Media at level 1 at Larkmead School
- Creative and Media at level 2 post 16 solely at the College

A careful implementation plan was required to ensure success of the key area of growth in a much broader spread at level 1 and pre entry. 'Gateway Centres' would be established from September 2010 providing individualised study to suit particular needs, abilities and interests.

### **9.4 NEET**

The College was working with key partners to tackle the growing number of young people in Oxfordshire who were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

This may provide a major challenge to the College which saw itself as only part of the solution and would be dependent on appropriate funding.

## **9.5 Enterprise**

Further to the success of last year's 'Taking the Plunge' event, plans were being finalised for the second enterprise training programme. 150 students in January 2010 and a further 150 in June 2010 would be immersed in the world of business planning and decision making to create, develop and "pitch" their product or service to a panel of judges. Unipart were supporting the event which would be held in their Conference Centre at Cowley.

## **9.6 Adult Learner Responsive**

Last year's revised target of £3.2m was met predominately through extended delivery of distance learning. In the present economic climate the College was seeking to ensure its curriculum offer reflected the needs of the community. Currently Adult provision (not including community education) was 9% higher than at the same point last year.

## **9.7 Franchise**

Following Board approval last year, a new franchise agreement had been arranged with Home Farm Trust (HFT), a national charity that supported people with learning difficulties. It would allow the twelve residents running a café to access an NVQ course. As all learners were entitled to fee remission, a 70/30 split in payment proportion had been agreed.

Franchise activity for 2009/10 with the existing three partners had been set out in the paper and were agreed.

## **9.8 Employer Responsive**

The College's response to the Skills Investment Strategy was being considered. Government funding would be targeted as follows:

- Withdrawal of 2008 Train to Gain (T2G) flexibilities
- Focus on activities that provided biggest skills gain
- Increase proportion of funding that was partly supported by fees
- Withdrawal of funding for courses with low economic impact.

T2G continued to be in demand from employers and the College would be challenged to work within the confines of the £388k funding envelope.

The delivery of Warehousing and Distribution and Skills for Life provision was currently the main focus but the response to the following five industry sectors identified for 2010/2011 was under consideration:

- Life Sciences
- Digital media and Technology
- Engineering Construction
- Advanced manufacturing
- Low Carbon Energy

## **9.9 Apprenticeships**

A programme had been agreed with the NHS and local Primary Care Trust that would allow progression from Apprenticeship linked to Access to Higher Education through to degree study at Oxford Brookes University.

All political parties had made it clear that 16-18 apprenticeships were the main

vehicle to fill the 'skills gap'. The College's growth had been 19+ apprenticeships. As funding envelopes were for specific numbers in each age group, strategies needed to be developed to extend the younger apprenticeship intake.

## 9.10 HEFCE

The draft IQER report was presented to the Performance Committee on 30 November. Predominately it outlined evidence of 'good practice' within the College's HE provision.

Two projects with Progress South Central were under consideration:

- Research to determine employer attitude to a Creative Arts Foundation Degree.
- Employer Engagement to provide dedicated time for HE course leaders and nominated team members to engage with employers to ensure that programme content met their needs.

Exploratory meetings with the London College of Fashion had been held to discuss the possible future development of a Foundation Degree in Beauty and Spa Management.

The College was working with BMW, Culham Centre for Fusion Energy, Pera and Oxford Brookes University with regard to the conversion of our HNC in Engineering to a Foundation Degree from September 2010. The possible incorporation of the new degree with BMW's Higher Apprenticeship Framework was also being discussed.

The report of the Vice Principal, Curriculum was noted.

10.

## STUDENT GOVERNOR'S REPORT

John Kanimba presented the Student Report. The following items were highlighted and discussed.

### 10.1 Communication between Governors and Students

A proposal to hold a meeting between the Chair and Vice Chair and ten students from across the College, immediately before Board meetings had been discussed. A trial would be held at the March meeting.

### 10.2 Student Committee

In recognition of the time constraints imposed by academic study on the Chair of the Student Committee and in an attempt to encourage a more pro-active role, the proposal that the Chair should be a paid appointment was thought worthy of consideration. It could possibly be taken as a sabbatical.

### 10.3 Funding of Residential Visits

Some students were unable to participate in residential visits through lack of funds. Students had proposed the creation of a bursary fund to assist students of limited means with the costs of College trips.

### 10.4 Student Facilities

Students were keen to have their own resource base to work from as the library became very crowded. Mature students had requested their own Common Room as an area for relaxation between lessons. A substantial number of A'

John  
Raftery  
David  
Doughty  
John  
Kanimba

level and Business students owned laptops and would be prepared to bring them into College if the wireless provision was extended.

## 10.5 Taking the Plunge

Last year's event was popular with A' level and Business students and the holding of two such events this year was appreciated.

The Chair commended John Kanimba on a first class, informative and succinct report. The Board agreed that SMT should explore:

- Establishing the Chair of the Student Committee as a paid appointment
- The creation of a bursary fund for students' residential visits
- The extension of IT wireless facilities throughout the College.

SMT

## 11. SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT 2008 – 09 (SAR)

Robin Smith reported that the Performance Committee had conducted a detailed review of the SAR on 30 November. Two Programme Area Managers [Health & Care and ESOL & Languages] had been present to discuss their particular areas. Overall satisfactory progress was being made towards attainment of 2012 targets as demonstrated by Robin's explanation of 'Grades – Distance Travelled since 2006/07' slide. A hard copy of the College Development Project (Strategic Plan) Destination 2012 monitoring report recording progress on the six key objectives and each of the specific sub measures was tabled.

**Resolved to:** approve the Self Assessment Report 2008-09.

*Neil Monaghan retired from the meeting*

## 12. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

Di Batchelor presented the report. In January 2009 LSC had conducted a quality assurance visit as a follow-up to the January 2008 audit of health and safety arrangements. These were considered "improving" rather than "static". Following a review of the 2008/09 Action Plan, a new plan for 2009/10 had been developed. Governors were advised that there were no Health and Safety concerns that needed their attention.

**Resolved to;** approve the Health and Safety Annual Report 2008/09

### 12.1 Safeguarding

Di Batchelor outlined the new arrangements for Vetting and Barring and Ofsted's new standards which would be applied at future inspections. Reviews of the College's procedures, staff records and the Child (and Vulnerable Adult) Protection Policy were being carried out.

The explicit expectations of governors in the Common Inspection Framework were listed in Di Batchelor's paper and were discussed. As the College's governors did not practice unsupervised access to children under 18 it was decided that there was no requirement for governors to undergo Criminal Records Bureau checks. However, in view of the importance which the Board attached to this subject, it was agreed that:

- Newly appointed governors should receive a briefing on 'Safeguarding' within three months of their appointment

David  
Bramble

- A governor with special responsibility for ensuring the College's compliance with 'Safeguarding' regulations and procedures should be appointed
- The Principal's termly report would contain, as a standard item, a report on any 'Safeguarding' issues.
- The annual declaration of eligibility to be a governor would include a statement that it was understood that no unsupervised access to children under 18 was permitted.

Teresa Kelly

David Bramble

Barbara Harker kindly agreed to act as the governor with special responsibility for 'Safeguarding'. She confirmed that as Headteacher of a Special School, she had received appropriate training.

Di Batchelor advised that there was no College representation on the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) and suggested that it would be beneficial if the College was a member. The Chair agreed to write to OSCB seeking their support in making enhanced checks portable between employers and suggesting that the College was included in OCSB membership.

John Raftery  
David Bramble

### 13. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY REPORT 2008/09

The annual report for last year was presented by Di Batchelor. It was noted that the College's ability to evidence its Equality and Diversity practices would, in future, contribute to a limiting factor in relation to the grade awarded by Ofsted at inspection. The Director, Learning Support had joined a national Learning and Skills Improvement Service network in London for sharing best E & D practice. LSC had funded an initiative to audit provision for learners in Oxfordshire with learning disabilities and difficulties. Over 800 students participated in the College's Diversity Festival. Governors noted that E & D featured strongly in staff training, was a key feature in the tutorial programme and an E & D course for employers was actively promoted by the College.

The Equality & Diversity Report for 2008/09 was noted.

### 14. GOVERNANCE MATTERS

#### 14.1 AoC Annual Conference

Teresa Kelly highlighted the main points covered at the Conference.

#### 14.2 Corporation Board Objectives

It was noted that the objectives for 2008/09 had been achieved. It was proposed that the same objectives would be monitored in the current year. Any governor wishing to suggest additional objectives was asked to contact the Clerk within 7 days.

All

#### 14.3 Governor Training

David Bramble asked for suggestions for the most convenient times for in house training sessions. It was generally agreed that 5.30 to 7.00pm on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday were best. It was noted that a 'Safeguarding' training session would be held at 5.30pm prior to the Board meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

All

### 15. CORPORATION BOARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS

15.1 Minutes of the following meetings were approved:

- Search & Development Committee of 22 October 2009
- Finance & Employment Committee of 26 November 2009
- Joint Audit and Finance & Employment Committees of 1 December 2009.

**15.2** The minutes of the Performance Committee meeting of 30 November would be taken at the next meeting. Robin Smith reported that the main item had been the Self Assessment Report which was covered by minute 11 above.

## **16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was none.

*All staff members left the meeting*

## **17. REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

John Raftery outlined the subjects covered by the Committee at their meeting on 12 November 2009.

## **18. PAY AWARD**

Following the recommendation of the Finance & Employment Committee, it was

**Resolved to:** approve an increase of 0.5% to salaries backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009. It was noted that the increase for 2009/10 was 1.5% which was in line with the recommendations of AoC and the College's budget provision.

The meeting ended at 8.40pm.