

# CORPORATION BOARD MEETING

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation Board held at the Abingdon campus on  
Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010 at 6.00pm

**Present:** John Raftery (Chair)      Neil Monaghan      **In attendance:** Terry Stock  
Carol Baker                              David Quayle              Di Batchelor  
Stephen Dexter                          Robin Smith                Miranda Coles  
Sylvia Doyle (from Item 6)    Mike Gaston  
Barbara Harker    David Bramble (Clerk)  
Bruce Hunt  
Teresa Kelly (Principal)

## Action

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Barry Jenner.

### 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.

Stephen Dexter declared an interest as a member of the HEFCE Audit Committee.

### 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2010 were approved.

### 4. MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

### 5. PROPERTY STRATEGY

#### 5.1 Witney Re-development Project

Terry Stock outlined the main points arising from the Estates Strategy Committee (ESC) meeting held on the previous evening. Warings (the preferred contractor) had produced at noon on 8 December 11 days late, an indicative cost based on compliant bid costs at Stage D design. The sum was £10,447,780, 25% over the cost plan. Taking into account suggested value engineering savings, the estimated overall budget overspend was £445,776.

The Committee and consultants were shocked by the figures and were particularly disappointed that no representative of Warings was present to explain the reason for the delay or the very high cost. The consultant cost accountant would visit the contractors to compare their estimates with the consultant's cost plan and try to reconcile the figures.

Governors expressed their disappointment at this turn of events which would lead to a loss of confidence in Warings and act as a warning to be aware of claims during the construction phase. In answer to a query on the impact of delay, Di Batchelor advised that the forecast completion date had slipped to 22 October

but the occupation had been planned for half term the following week.

The Board ratified the actions proposed by ESC.

The following recommendations from ESC were approved:

- Approve the borrowing requirement for G building, bringing the total borrowing approved to £5.8m
- Approve, in principle, the holding of a special meeting of the Corporation Board at the earliest practicable date following the next meeting of the ESC to approve the next steps in relation to the appointment of contractors.

The following points were noted:

- Note the actions of the ESC in relation to the appointment of Warings as the contractors for Phase 1 of the project
- Note SFA's approval for adding the refurbishment of G building to phase 1 of the project.

## 6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

### Strategic Plan

A document summarising the 24 hour Strategy event was presented by the Principal. The following items were identified for consideration in a new strategic plan;

- *The College needed to be better prepared to respond swiftly to change. Increasing our agility was a key element of how we should approach new growth potential*
- *The new strategic plan also needed to be more flexible – it needed to be a different type of plan to the current one*
- *Continual improvement must be centre stage with more emphasis on quality enhancement than quality assurance*
- *IT and the capacity that harnessing the potential of IT and e-learning needed to be a key driver*
- *The plan needed to set out the desire to be more opportunistic than currently was the case*
- *The plan needed to set out the position of the College with regard to current and future partnerships.*

SMT had been tasked with preparing a draft plan by May/June 2011.

The following comments were made by governors in relation the vision and plan:

- Was a new brand image required – it was possibly a shift or re-positioning
- Re-branding must be based on substance
- Partnerships should be seen as a means of enabling the College
- Remove “partnership” as it implies equal in everything. Business relationships were based on mutual benefit and profit
- Vision needed to be compelling and be underpinned by values
- Revised vision statement needed consideration by students/staff/governors. Two or three governors to be consulted.

### Update on current issues

6.1 Student Protest A silent student meeting outside the College was planned to protest against the withdrawal of Education Maintenance Allowances. 47% of our students were in receipt of EMAs. There was no concern that the protest may develop

Teresa  
Kelly

into an unruly event but governors were warned that it may attract media interest. A press statement would be prepared and circulated to all governors.

6.2 Funding Indicative funding guidance had been promised before Christmas. A big increase in funding for apprenticeships had been announced but it was moving money from the adult learning grant. Equality in funding between colleges and schools had been achieved by a reduction to £280 per pupil per subject for sixth form pupils in schools.

6.3 Education 'White Paper' A new Education Act was expected to be brought before parliament in late January/February 2011.

6.4 Developments There was a possibility that a University Technical College may be created in West Oxfordshire.

Further strategic considerations were covered in a confidential minute

## 7. VICE PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Mike Gaston presented the report.

### 7.1 Student numbers and funding

Position at 30 November 2010:

- 2078 full time students – 5% rise compared to same point in 2009/10
- Part-time enrolments predominately Adult responsive (19+) showed a fall of 43% but this had to be measured against a cut in Adult grant of 25%
- Self financing showed an increase of 123% but this had been planned to offset reduction in Adult responsive grant
- HEFCE funded provision showed growth of 31% compared to same point last year.

ILR Funding Estimate at 30 November gave following summary:

- 16-18 generated £8.2m against target of £8.9m
- 19+ generated £1.8m against target of £2.4m

Based on these figures there was a reasonable expectation that the College would meet its 2010/11 funding targets.

### 7.2 Curriculum Issues and Developments

Focus this term had been on improving success by ensuring implementation of improvement plans in Programme Areas. The Learning and Skills Quality Improvement Service (LSIS) had undertaken an organisational health check. The written report was awaited and would be considered by the Performance Committee. Initial outcomes contained no surprises and reinforced our own self assessment. Clear evidence of a staff with *"an overriding passion to do over and above what would normally be expected to ensure the success of their students"* was expressed.

### 7.3 Core College Tutorial Programme (CCTP)

CCTP was launched this year with 6 themed Festival weeks with Every Child Matters, Progression and Sustainability running across the year. Over 1,000 students attended sessions on Staying Safe week and Being Healthy was currently running.

### 7.4 Workplace Skills Survey

The College had participated in a workshop looking at issues in relation to Science Vale UK and to consider ways forward. Three key issues highlighted by the 2010 Oxfordshire employer skills study were:

- Continued recruitment difficulties for certain roles
- Skills gaps as a constraint on business
- Scope for growth in training activity

The College had introduced a new model for apprenticeship delivery that allowed the College, as an agency, to be the employer and to work with businesses to give placements thus taking some of the risk from employers.

### **7.5 Franchise Provision**

Performance of the College's franchised contracts was reviewed. It was noted that it was becoming increasingly difficult to produce provision within government priority areas. The position was noted.

### **7.6 OXETA**

The College had been invited to have a representative on the Board of Governors of OXETA. This was a collaboration bringing together ideas and disciplines beyond traditional engineering. OXETA would develop new and relevant short course technical provision to support Science, Engineering and Manufacturing and was seen as being part of the College's response to the STEM agenda.

The Vice Principal's report was noted.

## **8. SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT 2009/10 (SAR)**

Robin Smith reported that the Performance Committee had conducted a detailed review of the SAR on 29<sup>th</sup> November. The improvement plans for Art & Design, Science & Maths and Engineering & Technology had been discussed with Programme Area Managers. The significant points of the Record of Main Findings were highlighted and successes and areas for development were reviewed. Outcomes for students were good and the three year trend showed improvement with the College success rate moving from 76% to 79% and currently 84%.

Success rates for 16-18 students at Level 1, 3 and Very Short were improving. At Level 2 it remained at 75% and for Short courses the success rate remained high at 82%.

Success rates for 19+ students had increased at Level 1, 2, 3, Level H and Short Courses. Very Short courses was high at 97%.

Among the areas where improvement was required were:

- Achievement rates for 16-18 year olds on long qualification courses.
- Teaching for learning in Science & Maths and Engineering.
- Increasing the proportion of good and outstanding lessons
- Broadening the curriculum for employment-based students by involving employers more in the development of provision.

The Self Assessment Report 2009/10 was approved.

## **9. FINANCIAL MATTERS**

### **9.1 Internal Audit Report 2009 – 10**

Stephen Dexter advised that overall it was a good report, unqualified and the opinion of the auditors was that the College had adequate and effective risk management, control and governance processes to manage the achievement of the College's objectives.

Following the recommendation of the Audit Committee it was:

**Resolved to:** approve the internal Audit Report 2009 – 10.

### **9.2 Audit Committee Annual Report 2009 – 10**

The report was reviewed. It was noted that the SFA and current assessment of the College's financial health was 'Good', management of financial affairs was good and that the financial position would permit funding of the estimated £7.4m Witney re-development project. It was:

**Resolved to:** approve the Audit Committee Annual Report 2009 – 10.

### **9.3 Financial Statements for year ended 31 July 2010**

The independent auditor's report and regularity report were unqualified and had been circulated prior to the meeting with the operating and financial review, statement of governance and members' report.

Stephen Dexter explained that an exceptional pension credit of £618k had arisen from the pension scheme for non-teaching staff. In the absence of guidance from the SFA, the options as to how to account for this sum had been considered by the combined Audit and Finance & Employment Committee meeting. In the belief that there was no misrepresentation of the financial situation, the Financial Statements incorporated the credit in the Income and Expenditure account thereby increasing the surplus.

Following the recommendations of the Audit and Finance & Employment Committees, it was:

**Resolved to:** approve the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2010

Approval was given for the signing of the letter of representation by the Chair.

### **9.4 Financial Management & Control Evaluation Report 2009 – 10 (FMCE)**

Miranda Coles reported that, in accordance with SFA procedures, the report had been posted to the Gateway on 30 November. Amendments were permitted up to 31 December. All of the four main areas - Accountability Arrangements, Financial Planning Arrangements, Internal Control Arrangements and Financial Monitoring Arrangements had been self-assessed as 'Good' and an overall grading of 'Good' had been given.

**Resolved to:** approve the FMCE Report 2009 - 10

### **9.5 Management Accounts at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010**

Income was £162k lower than the budget figure of £4,739k. This was due largely to a shortfall in Work Based Learning income and the reasons were explained. Non pay expenditure was £100k under the budgeted amount of £1,869k and pay costs were £17k under budget of £2,588k.

The Income and Expenditure account showed a surplus before adjustments of £382k compared with the budgeted surplus of £427k. Surplus after adjustments was £307k.

Financial health grade remained as 'Good'. Cash balance was a healthy £2.75m.

**Resolved to:** approve the management accounts at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010.

## **9.6 Tuition Fees 2011/12**

Miranda Coles explained that there was insufficient detail available from the funding agencies to enable considered decisions on future tuition fees to be made. It was agreed that after outline funding allocations had been received, proposed fee levels should be circulated to all governors.

**Miranda  
Coles**

## **10. RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT**

The Audit Committee reviewed the report on 2 December. Only one high level risk was identified: "changes in SFA funding for all adult enrolments result in reductions to income received". There had been no significant deterioration in risk scores since July. Details of five newly identified risks were contained in the report.

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

## **11. STUDENT VOICE**

Di Batchelor explained that the proposed changes to 'student union' arrangements had been circulated to all members and the recommendation to form a Student Union Association had been approved out of committee.

**Resolved to:** ratify the decision to form a Student Union Association.

## **12. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Reports of the meetings of committees all held in the last few days would be considered at the next meeting. Brief oral reports were given by the committee Chairs.

## **13. GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

### **13.1 Self evaluation questionnaire**

David Bramble reported that evaluation of the responses to the questionnaire had identified several areas of doubt. A written brief clarifying such issues would be distributed.

**David  
Bramble**

### **13.2 Mentoring of students by governors**

A Director had suggested that some governors may be interested in acting as mentors to gifted and talented students. It was agreed that this was not a commitment which could reasonably be expected of governors. However, if there was an individual student studying in an area where a governor had specialist expertise it could be considered. The CRB implications of this were noted.

### **13.3 Mentoring of newly appointed governors**

Sylvia Doyle suggested that consideration should be given to the appointment of mentors for new governors. A simple 'buddy system' nominating a governor who could be approached if a new governor wanted advice was agreed. Robin Smith kindly offered to be the 'buddy' for Barry Jenner.

### **13.4 Standing Orders**

**Resolved to:** approve a new Standing Order on delegation of authority giving the Chair authority to act on behalf of the Board between meetings where a matter was urgent and delay until the next practicable meeting date for a meeting would be detrimental to the operations of the College or where the matter was within the spirit of existing policies or Board decisions.

## **14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair explained that Carol Baker's term as Academic Staff governor was coming to an end but she would consider putting her name forward for re-election. As it may be Carol's last attendance at a Board meeting, the Chair, on behalf of the Corporation, wished to thank her for the valuable contribution she had made, particularly to the Performance Committee during the last 8 years.

*The Principal and all members of staff retired from the meeting*

The Chair reported on the Principal's appraisal outlining outcomes of 2009/10 targets and targets for 2010/11.

Next meeting: Corporation Board meeting, Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011, 6.00pm, Abingdon.

Meeting ended at 8.25pm