

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation

Held at the College at 4pm on 01 October 2019

Present: Mr Burke, Mr Craft, Ms Danvers Hewitt, Mr Mason (Chair), Mr Mbombo, Mrs Mbubaegbu (arrived at 4.35pm), Mr Minter, Mr Pretty and Mr Royston-Ford.

Apologies: Mr Pembleton

In Attendance:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Ms Brennan | MD Student Central LC |
| Ms Cole | MD Highbury Foundations LC |
| Mr Cox | Group Finance Director (GFD) (arrived 4.35pm) |
| Ms Schweitzer | Clerk to the Corporation |
| Ms Walter-Nelson | ED HR & Organisational Development (ED HR & OD) |
| Ms Warren | ED Quality & Professional Development |

Minutes

1 – Standing Items

Minutes 2846 – 2852 were confidential.

2853 Attendance and Participation

Mr Pembleton sent his apologies.

2854 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2855 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 02 July 2019 were **Agreed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2856 Matters Arising

Members considered the Action Sheet. There were no Matters Arising that were not covered on the Agenda.

Minutes 2857 & 2858 were confidential.

2 – Chair's Report

2859 The Chair updated the Board on a number of issues:

- He had enjoyed the College's Celebration of Achievement on 05 July 2019. Mr Burke and Mr Pretty had also attended.
- He had visited Havant & South Downs and Fareham colleges, finding the visits interesting and informative. He was keen for governors to visit other colleges as well and this had been written into the governors' training plan.
- He had completed 1:1s with most governors and this information would feed into the Board's self-assessment.
- He had been impressed with the College's Birmingham Campus on a recent visit and asked for further information to be brought to the Board.
- The meeting with Portsmouth College in September had focused on apprenticeships. There were plans for further meetings.
- At the meeting with the University of Portsmouth in September (at which the Principal and two other governors were also present), both organisations emphasised their wish for future collaboration with apprenticeships being one possible area. In response to a question, the Chair confirmed that levies was one possible avenue. At the Chair's request, the Vice-Chancellor had undertaken to identify a suitable individual with a finance background to join the Board.
- In preparation for the Ofsted inspection, the Chair asked that Mr Pretty and Mr Pembleton, along with himself and the Vice-Chair, meet with inspectors.
- The Chair proposed that the Board update staff every month on their work. The ED HR & OD suggested this could be done through *Highbury Connect* which was circulated electronically to staff every fortnight.
- The Chair noted the College news in the media.
- The Chair stated that the FE Commissioner would visit the College at the end of the week.

3 - Principal's Presentation

2860 This item was taken after Minute 2862.

The Principal circulated a handout and outlined a number of strategic updates:

- Enrolment for 2019/20 was down by 100 on this time last year, partially due to the closure of the 6th Form Academy.
- Management accounts, budget and bond information from the HBSA Board meeting in August was available on the Governors' Portal.
- Ofsted preparation continued within the College, with training sessions for curriculum leads.
- There had been a number of recent meetings including with an entrepreneur in the city on a range of projects at the Sallyport. 230 students graduated (176 at level 3 or above) at the Celebration of Achievement in July.
- Other activities included free family friendly Royal Society of Chemistry workshops and a well-attended workshop for parents of maths and English students (which had led to a number of parents enrolling for a course).

The handout summarised key outcomes from the Planning Day, including draft College performance objectives, possible review of the Quality Monitoring Report, one page College strategies' updates for link governors, possible inspection areas to be shared with governors, a draft timetable for development of the new strategic plan (to be considered at the following meeting) and skills gap analysis.

The Principal circulated draft College performance objectives for discussion. Objectives were categorised by student numbers (full time 16-18 year olds), quality (Ofsted grade, student attendance, overall achievement rates, student satisfaction rates and destinations) and financial (liquidity, gearing and profitability). Each objective had a baseline, 2019/20 target, 2020/21 forecast and RAG rating. The objectives would be presented at every Board meeting and aimed to provide a strategic, at-a-glance overview of College performance, thereby enabling governors to more easily monitor performance. The Chair asked members to consider what, if anything, was missing, stating that each Committee would get the opportunity to reflect on the objectives at their next meetings. The Principal explained that not all data was available at present, hence some of the gaps. There was a discussion about the College's achievement targets, which were 5% above the national achievement rates (NAR), and the fact that the NAR changed from year to year. There was a discussion about adult destinations, with the Principal explaining that the definition of 'positive' destinations meant voluntary work, FE/HE or work. One member asked why the student satisfaction rate was so poor (84% against a target of 97%), to which the Principal responded that the Quality Monitoring Report provided further details. One member noted that more detailed information was needed in the 2020/21 column ('3 year improving trend' did not provide sufficient information on whether the College would meet the forecast).

Members agreed that the draft College performance objectives was a useful document to be used with immediate effect, with amendments made as necessary.

4 – Connecting with Owners

2861 Feedback from Owners, Governors' Planning Day 24 September 2019

During the morning the Principal ran a workshop aimed at preparing governors for inspection under the new Ofsted inspection framework. In the afternoon Mr Kayembe gave a cultural awareness presentation. This was followed by representatives from two of the College's owners, Portsmouth City Council (Post-16 Commissioning Manager) and Solent LEP (Local Growth Programme Manager: Employment & Skills) setting out their vision for collaboration with the College. Governors confirmed that it had been a useful and informative day, with one member remarking that the Ofsted training was good preparation and a helpful refresher on College achievement. After a short discussion members agreed that an additional meeting was required to continue these strategic discussions.

5 – Monitoring Organisational Performance

Minutes 2862 & 2863 were confidential.

2864 Annual Report on Insurance

The Annual Report on Insurance (Paper 2519/19/C) was taken as read and the Chair invited governors to comment/ask questions.

Under the Financial Regulations, Corporation was required to annually consider and approve the College's portfolio of insurances. The College was one of ten FE colleges in the Hampshire Colleges Consortium for Insurances. The College had existing

policies with Zurich Municipal, entered into on 01 August 2018 for a three year period. Current policies were updated every year with the overall policy due to expire on 31 July 2021. Attached to the report was the list of policies held and the levels of cover.

Members considered and **Approved** the College's insurance portfolio.

2865 Annual Staff Survey feedback

The Annual Staff Survey Feedback (Paper 2520/19/C) was taken as read and the Chair invited questions from members.

Staff were asked to participate annually in a survey to review progress against the *Amazing College, Amazing Staff* priority. This year's survey closely followed results of the staff survey conducted by Investors in People (IiP). The returns from both surveys were significant enough to make generalisations. In summary, the staff survey appeared to show:

- Greater engagement in survey
- Only 34% of staff would recommend Highbury as a place to work; of those who wouldn't (26%) they also lacked confidence in leaders and disagreed that there was a culture of openness and trust.
- Overall satisfaction was just 52%, against an 80% target. Although 71% were satisfied with the work they were able to deliver.
- 42% lacked confidence in leaders, of which there was also a lack of trust and belief that leaders were passionate about the success of Highbury.
- There had been positive increases in staff receiving Core Brief at meetings, and managers were faring well, with 78% saying they had been set clear goals and objectives and 84% saying they had regular one to ones, with over 90% of respondents knowing what was expected of them .
- 86% agreed they worked in effective teams.
- 27% of respondents experienced bullying and harassment, although the majority (68%) of this in 2019 was from students.
- There was overlap with the findings from the IiP survey earlier in the year.

In response to a question, the ED HR & OD confirmed that there were 400 substantive staff members and 76 others (corporate associates, volunteers etc). In response to a question, she stated she would have preferred a higher response rate but it was higher than the IiP response rate (34%) and that although the rates were low, there was a great deal of overlap between them which was helpful. One member asked if there would have been a better response if it had been completely anonymous. The ED HR & OD stated that if data was to be used at Learning Company level, it was not possible to assure total anonymity but respondents didn't have to name their manager and Learning Companies comprised a relatively large number of staff (approximately 80 in Highbury Foundations).

One member noted the low figure of 34% of staff who would recommend the College as a place of work, with the reason being a lack of confidence in leaders and a lack of openness and trust. The ED HR & OD stated that the survey enabled data about each Learning Company to be identified, meaning that individualised actions to address concerns could be identified. One member noted that members of senior management were not seen as open and accessible and another member stated that

staff didn't feel that the leadership team was part of their team. The ED HR & OD confirmed that there had been discussions at CLT to address this, with managers recognising they needed to be visible across the organisation. The ED HR & OD believed progress was being made and one MD stated that there had been a genuine team effort at enrolment events this year. The Chair believed that there needed to be a focus on students, not paperwork, and that empowering staff was key. He believed that a pay rise would boost staff morale and the Principal stated that, budget permitting, a pay award would be made in January 2020.

One member stated that it was a first class survey, with carefully constructed questions. It had a good enough response rate and the overlap between surveys meant that issues came out clearly and consistently, providing a lot to work with. The Chair thanked the ED HR & OD and members **Noted** the report and the recommendation to take forward actions as highlighted.

Minute 2866 was confidential.

6 – Governance Process matters

2867 SCIF evaluation

The SCIF evaluation report (Paper 2521/19/C) was taken as read and the Chair invited governors to comment / ask questions.

The purpose of the report was to provide governors with an evaluation of work undertaken within the College using the Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) funding. The College had applied for £181,085.20, of which at least 25% had to be match funded by the College. An award of £135,285.20 was made to the College, with £45,800 match funded. A condition of the bid was that the College would partner with a college judged good or better and that the partner college would receive at least 25% to support Highbury College with improvements. The College partnered with Weston College (outstanding). The bid needed to be considered in conjunction with the Quality Monitoring Report.

Four work streams had been identified:

- Monitoring and securing high quality TLA including moderation of the observation process
- Providing training, development and support for the teaching team
- Maths and English
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting the project implementation.

Each work stream outlined project targets. The report set out these work streams and targets in greater detail. The Chair thanked the ED Quality & Professional Development for bringing this report to the Board, stating that it was useful to see it, and noted that perhaps governors should visit Weston College as part of their training. The ED Quality & Professional Development stated that two external people who were working on the project were now employed by the College. Members **Noted** the progress of work undertaken as part of the SCIF bid.

2868 Corporation & Committee membership

The Clerk apologised that there was no paper for this and the following item, stating

that the intention had been to bring them forward following the Search & Governance Committee meeting but this had not been possible due to personal circumstances.

At its meeting on 23 September 2019, Search and Governance Committee discussed Corporation membership and the outcome of the recent call for a Vice-Chair of Corporation. The Clerk had not received any Vice-Chair of Corporation nominations and the Committee recommended that the call for nominations be re-issued. The Committee also discussed the size of Corporation and recommended that there be two additional members. These two recommendations were **Agreed**. One member suggested Hampshire Chamber of Commerce might be able to support the Board in identifying additional members.

2869 Governors' Action Plan

The Chair stated that the Governors' Action Plan needed to be completed as soon as possible and by the end of the calendar year at the latest. He therefore suggested a working group be convened to ensure that the actions were completed. Members **Agreed** that a working group be created and that it comprise Mr Burke, Mr Mason and Mr Royston-Ford.

2870 Committee minutes (for information)

The Governors' Action Plan Written Resolution dated 23 July 2019 was **Noted**. Minutes from the Search & Governance Committee on 23 September 2019 would be brought to the following meeting.

Minute 2871 was confidential.

2872 Governor Liaison Meetings Feedback

There was a brief discussion about governors' links for 2019/20, with the Chair stating that two members wished to be linked with areas that were more directly connected with their employment and where they could make a greater contribution, for example linking Portsmouth Naval Base (Mr Burke) with Public Services. The Principal stated that liaison links were carefully thought through, and added that governors were welcome to bring their expertise to the College and didn't need to do so through their liaison links.

Mr Pretty reported that his meeting was scheduled to take place shortly. Ms Danvers Hewitt had a useful and interesting meeting with the ED Quality & Professional Development the preceding day and had discussed CPD, being a more out facing College and the new Heads of Professional Practice roles. The Chair had met with the MD Student Central LC and discussed citizenship and values as well as making useful links with ESOL and Citizens Advice. The MD Highbury Technical Professional LC was on sick leave and so had not met with Mr Royston-Ford. Mr Craft, Mr Kayembe and Mr Minter had yet to schedule their first meeting.

7 – Next meeting, 12 November 2019

2873 Members **Noted** the draft Agenda for 12 November 2019.

8 – Self-Evaluation

2874 Ms Danvers Hewitt evaluated the meeting against a number of criteria using the grades Satisfactory, Requires Improvement or Unsatisfactory or yes / no.

| Statement | | Evaluation | Comments |
|-----------|---|----------------------|--|
| 1 | The Board was prepared for the meeting. | Requires improvement | Principal & GFD late due to confusion over pre-Board meeting. Two governors did not make effective contribution. |
| 2 | The Board's time was appropriately spent on Ends as opposed to means. | Satisfactory | Board reviewed KPI data which will keep focus strategic. Unfortunately conversation about process rather than really monitoring. However this promises to remove all the unnecessary reports |
| 3 | Each Board member was given an adequate opportunity to participate in discussion and decision making | Satisfactory | |
| 4 | The Board's treatment of all persons was courteous, dignified, and fair. | Satisfactory | |
| 5 | The Board's deliberations were open, fair, thorough, timely and orderly with discussions kept to the point. | Satisfactory | HR and Financial reports received well and information was focused. |
| 6 | The Board adhered to its Standing Orders | Satisfactory | |
| 7 | The Board adhered to its adopted Governance style: | Satisfactory | |
| | a. It emphasised outward vision | Yes | |
| | b. It encouraged diversity in viewpoints | Yes | |
| | c. It exercised strategic leadership more than overseeing management detail | Yes | Going over the Governors' Planning Day twice (Chair and Principal) wasn't best use of time. |
| | d. It maintained a clear distinction between Board and management roles | Yes | |
| | e. It used collective decision making | Yes | |
| | f. It looked to the future. | Yes | |

The meeting finished at 6.30pm.