

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation

Held at the College at 4pm on 02 October 2018

Present: Mr Allen (Staff), Mr Craft, Mr Mason, Mrs Mbubaegbu, Mr McCaffery (Student), Mr Minter, Ms Moody, Mr Slidel and Ms Youern (Chair).

Apologies: Ms Danvers Hewitt, Mr Henson and Mr Royston-Ford

In Attendance: Mr Cox - Group Finance Director (Minute 2694)
Ms Davies - Quality & Standards Manager (Minute 2693)
Ms Schweitzer - Clerk to the Corporation

Minutes

2687 Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the academic year, thanking those who had attended the two planning days over the summer break.

Ms Danvers Hewitt, Mr Henson and Mr Royston-Ford sent their apologies.

2688 Membership

The Clerk stated that two members were nominated for the office of Vice-Chair of Corporation and, following an electronic ballot, Mr Mason had received the most votes. It was therefore **Agreed** that Mr Mason serve as Vice-Chair of Corporation for a period of two years from 04 October 2018.

2689 Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2690 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 03 July 2018 were **Agreed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair welcomed the meeting's short Agenda.

Minute 2691 was confidential.

2692 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that were not covered in the Agenda.

Minute 2693 was confidential.

2694 Quality Monitoring Report

The Quality & Standards (Q&S) Manager joined the meeting and presented Paper 2405/18/C setting out the Quality Monitoring Report which showed progress against the eight quality objectives in the Quality Strategy 2017-2020 and expanded the headline data in the May 2018 Governors' Dashboard KPIs.

The Chair thanked the Q&S Manager for the concise report which identified what was working well and what needed to improve. Members discussed what was working well:

- Best case achievement was 90.2% which, if achieved, would be a 6.2% increase compared to 2016/17 final data but 1.2% below the College target to be at least 7% above the NAR. The College was unlikely to achieve the 90.2% target but there would be an improvement from last year.
- GCSE Maths and English (ME) achievement had increased by 11% in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17 but was 5.2% below the College target to be at least 7% about the national average. This was a massive improvement and indicated that the strategies were working. The Chair asked the staff and student governors if embedding courses either side of ME lessons was working and they confirmed that it was making a difference. One member stated it would be helpful to have feedback from students about how they feel it had gone and the Q&S Manager stated that the Leadership & Management team carried out regular student sweeps on specific themes to ascertain student views. This was providing rich data and information was cascaded out quickly so that changes could be implemented. The Chair encouraged governors to speak with students when they were in College, asking how their day was going, how their teaching was etc.
- There was a 10% increase in parent satisfaction in 2018 (77%) and a 13% increase in overall satisfaction (94%). The On Programme & Exit Survey identified that 95% of students felt that teaching, learning and assessment was good (12% increase from 2017). This improvement was the result of actions following the worst On Programme & Exit Survey results in 2016/17.
- Final attendance for 2017/18 showed 16 areas (out of approximately 44) were above the College target of 90%. The Chair asked whether this increase was good enough for Ofsted and whether they would look at attendance during their monitoring visit. The Principal confirmed that they would and that during the inspection they recorded 80% attendance but College data showed 85%. One member asked why the calculations differed and the Principal explained that they didn't go to all areas of the College and just looked at the register. She stressed that the College measured true attendance ie if a student wasn't present, s/he was absent.
- The College had achieved its target to reduce turnover in 2017/18 by 5%, which was 29% in 2017/18.
- Staff absence in 2017/18 was 1.49% and below the AoC benchmark of 3%.
- Staff sickness absence costs had decreased to £130,561.70 in 2017/18 (compared to £196,758.47).

One member stated that it felt the College was being more proactive and asked if

the Q&S Manager thought things were improving, to which she responded that this was definitely the case as departments were sharing good practice and there was a better atmosphere. Members turned their attention to what needed to improve:

- Since the last report, overall in year retention had dropped by 1.9% to 93.4%.
- Current achievement for Apprentices was 1% below 2016/17, with best case achievement at 72%.
- Final attendance at ME remained an issue at 77.5% (the target was 90%). The Q&S Manager stated this was an area of concern, but that sandwiching lessons should have an impact. The Chair asked if the College could ever get to Ofsted good with this issue and the Principal stated that ME was a focus during the last inspection and that attendance was an issue for the FE sector in general. She noted that the College currently had higher attendance than when it was graded outstanding so although in 2011 attendance was lower, the strategies in place were proving effective in gradually improving the rates.

The Principal highlighted that the College had seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of young people in ME for 2018/19 (293 to 478 Maths students in 2017/18 and 2018/19 and 297 to 484 English students in 2017/18 and 2018/19). This was a serious issue for the College as ME was a condition of funding. The Principal stated that the College was doing its best but that it was a problem within the city (all Portsmouth secondary schools were graded Ofsted good and yet results had not improved although were anticipated to do so in 2019/20) and that she had raised the issue with Penny Mordaunt and Gerald Vernon-Jackson and would continue to lobby nationally. One member asked what percentage of students were from outside the city and the Principal stated that this level student was from the city mainly. Another member agreed that it was right to raise the issue with city leaders to make sure that results improved. One member asked whether the College could get into schools to help, to which the Principal stated that the College was partnered with schools but there was a general suspicion about their involvement. In response to a question, the Principal stated that there were space limitations, but the College was recruiting more staff and putting on more classes. She noted the challenge of keeping students interested in their vocational programme when there was so much ME. The Q&S Manager stated that there would be a large number of resit sessions in November which hopefully would be successful and mean earlier achievement.

- Window 2 observations showed that only 55% were graded as good or better with the grade limiter for attendance. The Q&S Manager stated that changes had been made to the system this year, namely to simplify the process and monitor training / intervention needs on a weekly basis. The Chair asked whether this put pressure on staff and the Q&S Manager stated that there was a strong developmental focus to the feedback.
- It was not possible to report on the progress of students and apprentices in 2017/18 at this stage. It was anticipated the non-compliance issues would be resolved shortly and information included in the next report.

Members then turned their attention to the Governors' Dashboard KPIs with one member seeking clarification on staff turnover.

The Chair thanked the Q&S Manager and progress against Quality Objectives and

Amazing Staff was **Noted**. The Q&S Manager left the meeting.
Minute 2695 was confidential.

2696 Review of Governance 2017/18

The Clerk presented Paper 2410/18/C setting out the 2017/18 governance review.

The Clerk stated that previously this report was considered annually by Search Committee and that it summarised Corporation's performance against its Performance Indicators including attendance at meetings, as well as reporting on attendance at Governor Liaison meetings and training and development activities. It also summarised feedback from Corporation and Committee meetings. The Chair asked the Clerk to identify one key issue in the report, to which she responded that the report felt outdated, particularly in the light of the College's new governance arrangements. She felt that whilst an annual governance report was useful, more meaningful PIs could be identified with more qualitative rather than quantitative measures. The Principal confirmed that the report was for the College's benefit and was a small part of what Ofsted looked at.

The Review of Governance 2017/18 report was **Noted** and it was **Agreed** that this issue would be explored following discussions concerning the College's new governance arrangements.

2697 New Governance Arrangements

The Clerk presented Paper 2407/18/C concerning the College's new governance arrangements. The report developed Corporation's previous decision to adopt a new model of governance and proposed the adoption of Board Governance Policies to underpin the policy governance model (Carver). It also proposed amendments to the College's Instrument and Articles of Government (I&A).

The Clerk stated that the policy governance documentation was the result of discussions at the planning days held on 14 August and 24 September 2018. There had been detailed discussions on the policy governance approach which sought to achieve clarity of focus and responsibility as well as a clear system of delegation. There had also been discussions on the College's values and its owners, particularly its external owners. The Board Governance Policies set the framework to the model and reflected statutory requirements of the I&A and the Funding Agreements and would replace Corporation's Standing Orders. In the event of any uncertainty, statutory requirements would take precedence.

The Chair was concerned that some members were not at the planning days and had not received hard copies of the report prior to the meeting (although they had been available on the Governors' Portal). She wondered therefore if the Board was in a position to agree the documents. After some discussions members expressed their willingness to accept the views of those who attended the planning days. Members agreed that moving to policy governance was an iterative process and that the Board needed to get started. It was **Agreed** that a Task and Finish working group be established to take this work forward. This group would comprise the Principal, Mr Mason and Mr Minter. The Clerk would write to members not currently present to invite them to join the group.

Members then turned their attention to the draft Agenda and noted that not all items would feature at every meeting.

- Members agreed that *deep dives* (Ends Policy matters) could be a useful mechanism if there was a particular concern.
- There was a discussion about *rehearsal / scenario planning* and the Principal stated examples could be responding to Ofsted, rehearsing a meeting with another board to explore a partnership, finding out more about the LEP or asking the leader of Portsmouth City Council about ME in the city.
- *Self-evaluation* would engage board members in a different way with a cycle of members leading a critique of the Board and its performance according to criteria in one of the Board Governance Policies.

The Principal relayed a discussion at the September planning day concerning monitoring quality, which had not initially been referenced in the Board Governance Policies. Monitoring quality was a key area for the Board and so had been articulated under board delegation. The Principal also stated that initially the Principal's Report was not included on the Agenda but there was an executive limitation to keep the board informed so she had re-instated it. One member suggested that the information on the back of the Agenda be retained.

Members then considered Highbury College's I&A of Government. The Clerk stated that the changes highlighted in red reflected changes to the rules on automatic disqualification of charity trustees and previously agreed changes to Corporation's Committees. Eversheds had also additionally highlighted a number of relatively minor changes required to bring the I&A in line with previous Corporation decisions including reducing Corporation to eleven members (Clause 3(a)), one student governor (Clause 2(e)) and setting Corporation's quorum (Clause 13).

Corporation Agreed:

- The Board Governance Policies, subject to further refinement by the Task & Finish working group;
- The draft Board Agenda and its use with immediate effect;
- To establish a Task and Finish working group to guide the Board on developing its policy governance work with the aim of completing this work by 19 March 2019;
- Amendments to the Instrument and Articles of Government as discussed.

2698 Annual Review of Confidential Material

The Clerk presented Paper 2409/18/C setting out the annual review of Corporation and its Committees confidential minutes and associated papers.

The Clerk stated that Corporation had a statutory obligation to regularly review all confidential material to ensure that as much information was in the public domain. Previously this annual report was delegated to Search Committee. Minutes were marked release or retain according to criteria set out in Corporation's Standing Orders as well as previous guidance from Search Committee.

Members were clear that minutes concerning NESOT individuals as well as information relating to NWT should be retained as confidential, and suggested that the Clerk liaise with Burton & South Derbyshire College. One member suggested

that, given the number of minutes involved, it would be more efficient to agree the length of time a document and its associated minute should remain confidential at the time of its consideration. This could be achieved by adding a section to the report template.

Subject to the double checking of some minutes and associated papers as discussed, it was **Agreed** that the documents be retained as confidential or released into the public domain as set out in the paper and that in future, a decision on whether / how long a document was to be retained as confidential would be made at the time the issue was discussed.

2699 Use of Common Seal of the Board

The Clerk presented Paper 2411/18/C concerning use of the Common Seal of the Board.

The Clerk stated she was obliged to report to Corporation when the Seal had been used. The Seal had been used on 20 July 2018 in connection with signatories for the College's bank account in Nigeria. There was some discussion about the use of the Seal and the Clerk reported that she had asked Eversheds for further guidance.

Corporation **Noted** the use of the Common Seal of the Board on 20 July 2018 and **Agreed** that the issue be explored further by the Task and Finish working group.

2700 Minutes of Staff Working Group

The Minutes of the Staff Working Group meeting on 14 December 2017 were **Noted**.

The Clerk stated that the next meeting on 13 November needed to be rescheduled and that she would seek governors' availability. Governors confirmed that they wished to meet on 18 December.

Self-Assessment of Meeting

Five evaluation forms were returned to the Clerk. Not all members agreed that papers arrived in time (several noted that the new governance arrangements papers were not received prior to the meeting although one member acknowledged they were available on the Governors' Portal) and were clear and concise (one member stated '*excellent quality monitoring report*'), containing sufficient information upon which to make decisions. Members felt able to contribute to the debate and decision-making process and all members felt that Corporation challenged and questioned reports sufficiently. Members were satisfied that the decisions arrived at were sound and that the impact of decisions on students and the College was clear. One member felt that the Chair provided effective leadership and both members felt that the Chair ensured that there was enough time for debate and that all Governors were able and encouraged to participate in discussions. Members agreed that the meeting was clerked effectively. Under other comments / suggestions one member stated s/he '*was pleased Chair asked Staff and Student governors their views*' and another member stated that it was '*a constructive and efficient meeting.*' Under additional briefings / training one member suggested '*visits to other colleges where Carver model is being used.*'

The meeting ended 6.35pm