

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation

Held at the College at 5pm on 03 July 2018

Present: Mr Allen (Staff), Mr Craft, Ms Danvers Hewitt, Mr Mason, Mrs Mbubaegbu, Mr Minter, Mr Royston-Ford, Mr Slidel and Ms Youern (Chair).

Apologies: Mr Bain, Mr Henson, Mr McCaffery (Student) and Ms Moody.

In Attendance: Mr Cox - Group Finance Director (Minute 2679)
Ms Davies - Quality & Standards Manager (Minute 2677)
Ms Schweitzer - Clerk to the Corporation

Minutes

Part 1 – Standing Items

2672 Apologies for Absence

Mr Bain, Mr Henson, Mr McCaffery (Student) and Ms Moody sent their apologies.

2673 Membership

There were no membership issues other than those on the Agenda.

2674 Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2675 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 08 May 2018 were **Agreed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2676 Matters Arising

Minute 2670: Health & Safety Update: In response to a question from the Chair, the Principal stated that a governor could join the College health & safety meetings through the governor liaison scheme in 2018/19.

Minute 2677 & 2678 was confidential.

2679 Quality Monitoring Report

The Quality & Standards Manager joined the meeting and presented the quality monitoring report (Paper 2401/18/C). In summary the report stated that:

Retention: Since the last report, overall in year retention had dropped by 0.4%, Study Programme IYR had declined by 1.2 and Adult Learning Programme IYR had dropped by 0.1%. ME IYR was below the College target at 91.3%; 90.5% for ME in Study Programmes and 93.3% for ME in Adult Learning Programmes. IYR for Apprentices was a cause for concern and below the College target for all Sectors. IYR for Adult Learning Programmes remained above the College target at 97.4%.

Achievement: Best case overall achievement was 94.1%. If achieved, this would be a 10.1% increase compared to 2016/17 final data.

Attendance: Attendance was below the College target with the exception of 7 areas; Business, Highbury Birmingham, 6th Form Academy, ESOL, Foundation Prospects, Engineering and Teacher Education. Attendance in ME remained an issue at 76.1%.

Student Progress: 76% of students were meeting their predicted grades; 15% were exceeding and 10% were working below their predicted grades.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment: Fourteen teachers were currently receiving support with Teaching, Learning and Assessment from the Advanced Practitioners. Sixteen teachers were engaged in 1:1 coaching sessions. Student and Apprentice learning and progress was impacted on due to inconsistencies in assessment methods. An Assessor Conference was planned for 22 August 2018.

Staffing: There had been a reduction of £45,188.49 in the cost of sickness absence when compared to the same period last year.

The Chair stated that the key thing she noticed was that things were not improving. She therefore asked the Quality & Standards Manager to talk through the key actions, drawing out what governors needed to consider so that they understood the issues, what success looked like and when it would happen.

The Quality & Standards Manager stated the College was doing everything it could to improve achievement and in year retention. Success meetings, chaired by the Principal and attended by Business Intelligence, were currently being held for all programmes to identify achievements, at risk students and what further support was needed. 19 out of 23 of these meetings had taken place and, excluding maths and English (ME), data was generally showing an improvement. The ME success meeting would be held the following day and would identify the students who didn't attend their GCSE exam, achievements and, for functional skills, student achievement plans. One member asked if it was the right time to have such a meeting, rather than a meeting earlier in the year when there was still time for remedial work. The Quality & Standards Manager stated that it was a good time as achievements were already in and they could focus on the right students as there was still time to make a difference (some students were brought forward from September). She noted that success meetings took place as often as necessary.

The Quality & Standards Manager noted that RAG rating showed that whilst the College may not have met its own target, it was above the national average in many areas. One member noted that there were very few reds and asked what extra action was taking place to address these areas. The Quality & Standards Manager stated that a notice of concern was issued to the sector and measures identified to support improvement. With regards to recruitment, there was an initial 42 day period where students could be withdrawn if they were not on the right programme. Five areas were in special measures and, based on the success meetings, there seemed to be improvement.

The Chair stated that she was not clear the College knew how to solve the ME problem as the College had been trying various initiatives but the situation hadn't changed since April. The Quality & Standards Manager agreed this was an area of concern. However, there had been some impact in some areas eg attendance, and ME was the subject of a large review and increased monitoring. The Principal noted that, for example, action 1 in the 2017/18 SQIP concerning attendance would be carried forward and that some actions were already in place for September. Changes included teaching ME at each College campus meaning that students would no longer need to travel to a different campus and timetabling ME between vocational lessons rather than the beginning or end of the day. The Staff Governor supported this idea, stating that it would then be possible for teaching staff to shepherd students to their ME class. One member asked if ME needs were identified early enough, to which the Quality & Standards Manager responded that all students did a test during the assessment process to identify their starting point as well as periodically throughout the year to measure progress. The Principal believed this was a hearts and minds issue as some students simply did not want to attend ME and that the College would continue to devise strategies involving timetabling, parents and incentives etc. The College intended to make more of the fact to parents that the participation age had been raised to 18.

Members recognised that staff were working hard in this difficult area. One member stressed the importance of a cross College ME approach, asking if the right CPD was in place to ensure that teachers really understood and supported this approach, and were able to embed ME in their lessons. The Staff Governor believed they did, stating that tutors visited ME lessons to see how these subjects could be better embedded in their lessons. One member stated that he had seen that maths was embedded in lessons when looking round Northharbour and another stated that she had observed this in learning walks. The Principal noted it was easier to embed maths in most technical areas than English. One member thought it important to make ME fun and asked if they were embedded in the College's extra-curricular activity. The Quality & Standards Manager confirmed that this was indeed the case, through the College's enrichment programme and themed weeks and, in response to a question, the Staff Governor confirmed that some activities were successful, others less so. The Principal believed that the points members were raising went back to making good use of the governor liaison scheme. She stated that there was a huge amount of activity concerning teaching, learning and assessment (TL&A) and suggested that it might be useful to explore the richness of this activity with the College's TL&A professionals at the planning day. Members agreed, noting that it wasn't a case of the Board disputing activity was taking place, simply a case of identifying where members could provide stretch and challenge.

Another member asked about the quality of ME teaching, noting the importance of

aspirational teachers. The Quality & Standards Manager drew members' attention to her report which outlined how the College assessed teachers (graded observations and learning walks) and that the Director with responsibility for quality identified emerging themes / developmental needs and organised training accordingly. One member asked what teachers felt and what they thought the problem was, noting that it was an important and yet difficult conversation.

One member wondered if the College was still struggling with ME because it was unclear why students were not doing well and therefore whether it could interrogate its data to identify correlations between, for example, success and attendance. The Principal stated that the College had carried out research and identified a direct link between attendance and achievement. It had also identified that poor achievement at College was mainly due to young male students in the city's four most deprived wards with poor prior attainment. To address this effectively required a city-wide approach. Whilst the College had plans to work with schools to understand GCSE approaches, more buy-in was required to understand more fully what was happening in schools and so to identify how best to work in partnerships. In the meantime, the College would continue to work on hearts and minds. More students this year were studying ME than previously which was a worry, but data showed that more students were attending their exams than previously so at least there was a chance of success. Exams for functional skills continued right through to September so if students failed to turn up to an exam, vocational teachers would try to ensure they attended at the next opportunity. The College provided pre-exam support to students such as revision sessions, breakfast and wellbeing sessions.

Members agreed that, given the importance of the issue, ME should be monitored by the Board at every meeting. In response to a suggestion to re-instate a Quality Committee, the Principal stated that she would not support such a committee as she did not believe it would help focus the College any more than it currently was and that it would not fit within the framework of the new governance model. The Chair agreed, stating that quality was everyone's concern. The Principal believed that proper scrutiny of the SQIP and the Quality Monitoring Report (including the monthly Governors' Dashboard KPIs) alongside more effective use of the governor liaison scheme would provide more than adequate monitoring. There was a brief discussion about the format of the report, with one member saying it would be useful to have all the information in one place on a single side of A4, focusing on the top five targets for the year or to report by exception. The Principal did not believe it possible to reduce the report so dramatically. The Chair summarised that the report needed to set out clear actions, milestones and success criteria, alongside ME, with a greater focus on actions rather than data.

Finally, the Quality & Standards Manager reported that student satisfaction this year was at 94%. This represented a 14% increase on last year's disappointing results. Data was still being analysed but it seemed that the student experience had turned around. A full report would be brought to the next meeting.

The Quality Monitoring Report was **Noted** and the Quality & Standards Manager left the meeting.

Minutes 2680 and 2681 were confidential.

2682 Corporation membership / succession planning

The Clerk presented Paper 2400/18/C setting out Corporation membership and succession planning.

The Clerk stated that Ms Calderbank and Mr Tonge had recently resigned from the Board, Mr McCaffery had been re-elected Student Union President meaning he would serve a second year as student governor and Mr Minter and Ms Youern's terms of office were due to end in 2018. The Clerk outlined recommendations concerning Audit Committee, namely that Mr Bain chair and Mr Royston-Ford join the Committee, that an additional member be agreed and that its Terms of Reference be amended to preclude student and staff governors being members (in line with the revised Joint Audit Code of Practice). Remuneration Committee also needed an additional member. Finally, the Clerk asked members to consider succession planning for the Chair and Vice-Chair of Corporation. The Chair's second term of office as governor and Chair would end on 04 October 2018 and the Vice-Chair wished to stand down as Vice-Chair in October 2018 and as a governor in December 2018. With regards to the Chair, the Clerk noted that Standing Orders provided for the total period of membership to exceed the usual eight years in some circumstances including commitment to the Corporation in terms of attendance and contribution at meetings and training, full participation in the Governor Liaison Scheme, if they had special skills that would be hard to find, if their level of governance experience at the College was required to balance out the relative inexperience of new governors or if they chaired a Committee.

The Chair stated that Mr Minter had been an asset to Corporation and she very much wished to see him serve a second term. The Clerk stated that Mr Minter had attended 25 out of a possible 30 meetings during his four-year term, an impressive 83%. Mr Minter had previously expressed to the Chair that he was willing to serve a second term but that he would prefer a 4pm start for meetings. Members **Agreed** that meetings start at 4pm and that Mr Minter be re-appointed to the Corporation under the general category 2(1)a of Highbury College's Instrument and Articles of Government for a term of four years from 08 July 2018 to 07 July 2022.

Members discussed Audit and Remuneration Committees and **Agreed** that:

- Staff and student governors should not sit on Audit Committee;
- Mr Bain and Mr Royston-Ford retrospectively join Audit Committee, Mr Bain retrospectively chair the Committee and Ms Danvers Hewitt join the Committee;
- Mr Mason and Mr Royston-Ford join Remuneration Committee.

There was a discussion concerning the office of Chair of Corporation (the Chair offered to absent herself from the discussion but members asked her to remain). One member stated that the College was currently in a very difficult position and this, combined with the recent influx of new governors, led him to believe that it was in the best interests of the College to retain the current Chair. Another member agreed, stating that the Chair had done a fantastic job and that it would be preferable for her to stay on as Chair at least for a while. A third member agreed with both these views. The Chair then asked the Principal for her views. The Principal responded that given the College's current situation it would be really helpful if the current Chair could continue. The Chair stated that it had never been her intention to become Chair but, as Vice-Chair, she had taken on the role in

December 2013 when the previous incumbent resigned suddenly. During her tenure she felt the time pressure with running two businesses and had wondered if she should resign following the Ofsted inspection. She stated she was happy to continue as Chair but needed to know that she had the full support of the Board. The Board confirmed their full support for her as Chair and it was therefore **Agreed** that Ms Youern be re-appointed to the Corporation under the general category 2(1)a of Highbury College's Instrument and Articles of Government for a term of four years from 05 October 2018 to 04 October 2022 and that she be re-appointed as Chair of Corporation from 05 October 2018 to 04 October 2020.

There was a brief discussion concerning the Vice-Chair of Corporation and the Clerk stated that Mr Mason had previously expressed a willingness to be considered for the office. The Clerk would invite nominations for this office prior to the next meeting.

2683 AoC South East Regional Governance Forum, 29 June 2018

Ms Danvers Hewitt agreed to circulate her notes from this event.

2684 Governor Liaison Visits

Due to time constraints members did not provide an update on their visits.

2685 Minutes of Committee

The minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 05 June 2018 were **Noted**.

Minute 2686 was confidential

Self-Assessment of Meeting

Six evaluation forms were returned to the Clerk. Members agreed that papers arrived in time and most members agreed they were clear and concise (one did not agree and another member noted that '*a number of papers were received at the meeting*'), containing sufficient information upon which to make decisions (one member noted that '*Much was a matter of report*'). 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 referred to his comment that '*much was a matter of report*'). Members felt that the Chair provided effective leadership and 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 additional comments one member wrote '*As discussed a single sheet of KPIs that can be monitored at ease are needed.*' And another member wrote '*I wonder if it would help if we had a focus at the Board on the areas where scrutiny of quality is needed - one department per meeting throughout the year.*'

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at 4pm on 02 October 2018.

The meeting ended at 7.45pm.