

**Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation  
Held at the College at 5pm on Tuesday 04 July 2017**

**Present:** Ms L Burt, Ms F Calderbank, Dr L Carter, Mr M Craft, Mr M Lawther, Mrs S Mbubaegbu, Ms D Moody, Mr J Rees-Evans, Mr D Roberts, Mr H Slidel, Mr J Snow, Ms S Ward and Ms N Youern

**Apologies:** Mr P Daneshvar, Mr A Minter and Mr R Tonge.

**In Attendance:** Mr J Cox - Group Finance Director  
Ms C Ellis - Director Research & Development (Mins 2595 & 2598)  
Ms P Schweitzer - Clerk to the Corporation

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**M i n u t e s**

**Part 1 – Standing Items**

**2590 Apologies for Absence**

Mr Daneshvar, Mr Minter and Mr Tonge sent their apologies.

**2591 Membership**

It was Dr Carter and Mr Lawther's last Corporation meeting and the Chair thanked them for their contribution over the last four years. The Chair also thanked the two Student Governors and wished them well in the future. She presented all four Governors with a gift.

The Chair's proposal to re-order the Agenda to ensure the most important items had sufficient time for discussion was agreed.

**2592 Declaration of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2593 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2017 were **Agreed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**2594 Matters Arising**

**Minute 2584: Quality Report:** One member noted that at the last meeting *'it was agreed that comparable retention figures for December and January would be looked at. One member stated it would be useful to have more understanding of how the split between entry, long and short qualifications worked.'* This information was not in the Quality Report to be considered at the meeting and it was therefore agreed that this

information be forwarded to Ms Ward.

## **Part 2 –Items for Decision**

### **2595 Student Success Targets 2016/17: Achievement, Progression & Destination**

This item was taken second on the Agenda.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Principal stated that targets were set late due to final achievement data only being available in October, however these targets should have been brought to Corporation in the spring. Targets were benchmarked nationally where possible and in the absence of national data, the College had created its own baseline.

The Director Research & Development presented Paper 2299/17/C identifying 2016/17 achievement targets for classroom learning and apprentices as well as targets for progression and destination. Results for 2015/16 showed that achievement was below the national average in many cases, particularly for students aged 16-18. Targets for achievement of classroom learning had been set taking into consideration the best possible achievement rate and the national average. With regards to apprentices, targets had been set at the best possible rate for both timely and overall achievement. These targets were ambitious, however, there had been a significant focus on completion of apprentices in 2016/17 and the targets reflected this work. Achieving the targets set for classroom learning and apprenticeships would secure an increase in achievement at all levels and ages compared to 2015/16. The Principal clarified that maths was included in the proposed achievements targets for 2016/17 by age and level.

Corporation **Approved** the 2016/17 Student Success Targets.

### **2596 Corporation & Committee membership & size**

The Clerk presented Paper 2301/17/C setting out Corporation and Committee size and membership, stating that Search Committee had made a number of recommendations at its previous meeting. She drew members' attention to the report's recommendations.

There was a discussion concerning the size of Corporation in the light of views expressed in the Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire 2015/16, and in particular the importance of balancing the number of independent governors with College based governors (ie the Principal, Student and Staff governors). The Chair believed that a Corporation of 18 members would be able to support the current Committee structure. The Clerk confirmed that the Student Union President would remain Student Governor in the event of reducing the number of Student Governors. One member believed that student representation was important because it was what the College was all about. The President of the Student Union believed it preferable to retain two Student Governors, although the second Student Governor noted the challenges of contributing effectively to meetings. The Principal stated that it was important for support and academic staff to be given the opportunity to be elected to Corporation.

Corporation **Agreed** that:

- Ms Youern continue as Chair of Corporation until 04 October 2018 (not 05 December 2018 as previously agreed);
- Ms Moody be appointed to a second term of office as Governor from 03 December 2017 – 02 December 2021 and that she step down from Finance Committee and join Search Committee;
- Mr Daneshvar step down from Search Committee and join Finance Committee;
- Ms Ward join Remuneration Committee;
- Mr Tonge chair Audit Committee from 09 July 2017 – 08 July 2019;
- Corporation be reduced from 20 to 18 members to comprise 14 independent governors, the Principal, two staff governors (one academic and support) and that consultation be undertaken to reduce the number of Student Governors to one.

### **Part 3 – Items for Discussion**

#### **2597 ESFA Letter: The Importance of Strong Financial Management & Governance**

This item was taken third on the Agenda.

The Principal presented Paper 2298/17/C setting out a letter dated April 2017 addressed to College principals from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) concerning financial management and governance.

The letter reiterated the importance of strong financial management and governance, stressing that Colleges should put strong governance in place, provide clarity of direction and use high quality self-assessment and appropriate independent challenge to test the College's position.

In line with the ESFA Chief Executive's request, the Principal had shared the letter with the Finance Director, Chair of Governors and Chair of Audit Committee. In addition, advice had been sought from Search Committee as to how best to enable the discussions at Corporation and it had been agreed that the letter, financial planning checklist and Code of Good Governance (both referenced in the letter) would be taken to Corporation and members invited to:

- Use the checklist as an aide memoire to ensuring adequate challenge to the five-year financial plan and forecast;
- Consider the Code of Good Governance as a framework against which improvements could be made. Search Committee would draw out five key areas for improvement and members were asked to raise any particular areas for concern with the Clerk prior to the meeting on 18 September.

The Chair stated that Search Committee believed it best to carry out a more detailed audit against five key areas of the Code, as opposed to ensuring compliance with every last element. Members agreed with this approach and the Chair invited members to share their views with her. One Search Committee member stated that he found the Code a clear and refreshing document and that the Code would link with the annual Board self-assessment questionnaire. The Chair of Finance Committee noted that the ESFA's key message concerned financial control and governance and that the College had been through a long and arduous process with its finances and that put it in a strong position.

Corporation **Noted** the report.

## 2598 **Quality Report**

This item was taken first on the Agenda.

The Director Research & Development joined the meeting and presented the Quality Report (Paper 2293/17/C) updating Corporation on the revised 2017 Operational Targets for Quality and Standards. The report showed:

- The College had improved processes to support the improvement of key areas identified in the 2015/16 Self-Assessment Report.
- Training of quality assurance processes had been rolled out to Health and Construction and feedback from staff had been extremely positive.
- There continued to be a gap in the retention of students aged 16-18 and those aged 19+.
- Although retention of apprentices by level and age was above the national average in all cases, retention of apprentices aged 24+ was low.
- 85% of graded observations in window 2 were judged to be good or better compared to 75% in window 1. The proportion of inadequate lessons had reduced by 3% to 3%.
- Overall attendance was above 85% and was improving. Attendance was above the 90% College target in four areas.

There was a discussion about **Objective 4: students will have attendance rates of at least 85%**, and the Director Research & Development stated that attendance was linked with a number of aspects including retention and achievement. Given its importance a strategy had been introduced within the College meaning that attendance below 85% was now a limiting grade during graded classroom observations. This had been tough as it required a culture change, with peer pressure and support, but it was now beginning to have an impact. The Principal stated it was a question of winning hearts and minds as well as being firm and that the strategy was raised at every *Amazing College, Amazing Staff* teaching staff meeting.

The Director Research & Development drew members' attention to **Objective 6: robust strategies in place to support staff, students and stakeholders to improve standards to outstanding levels**, in particular that the calendar had been brought forward in terms of reporting including Sector Reviews, to ensure a rapid action response.

There was a discussion concerning the fact that feedback from students in Sector Review focus groups did not mirror the results of the student survey. In response to a question, the Principal stated that the focus groups were not self-selecting. The Director Research & Development stated that more work was needed to join up data sets and triangulate information. One member noted the increased dissatisfaction with IT systems (down 9% to 47% from the previous year). The Director Research & Development stated that it was about having the right kit in the right place for each course and that there was a focused upgrade plan over the summer which would go a long way to address this issue. The Principal reminded members that there had been issues with the IT network infrastructure for 18 – 24 months and that a major upgrade had been completed the previous weekend and that specialists would now be brought in to review the system. The College had previously had excellent IT facilities and had invested heavily in future proofing and it was therefore a source of great frustration for students and staff that it had not been possible to identify the problem with the network. The Student Union President confirmed that IT was one of the two issues raised at every Student Voice meeting (the other being canteen prices).

One member noted that the On Programme and Exit Survey questions often contained multiple elements (for example asking students to assess '*the quality of teaching, training and assessment on their programmes*') and that some questions were unclear (for example what was meant by College facilities?). She therefore suggested that to ensure feedback was more helpful, the questions were clearer and more specific, separating distinct issues and eliminating nuances.

Clarification was given in response to a number of issues raised:

- Data showing in year retention by sector and age was not benchmarked against national figures.
- Quality assurance training was taking place to address the gap between the retention of students aged 16-18 and 19+.
- Views of students with low level support (as opposed to those with high needs) were captured through sector specific and focus groups.
- A number of areas had shown an increase in attendance of just under 2% compared to the 2017 spring term.

Corporation **Noted** progress to date against the 2017 Operational Targets for Quality and Standards.

## **2599 Principal's Report**

The Principal presented Paper 2294/17/C setting out her termly report updating Corporation on developments at the College, in the Portsmouth area, nationally and internationally and on FE related policy and other

developments impacting on the College's priority themes. The Principal drew members' attention to the fact that information was grouped under the College's seven priority themes and stated that the Operational Plan and partially completed mid-year monitoring report (discussed at CLT that morning) was available on the Governors' Portal.

Under **Priority Theme 4: Alliances, Partnerships and Collaboration**, the Principal stated that contracts for the purchase of Nescot's shares had finally been completed and the process of transferring the company registration in KSA to the new company, Highbury Burton Saudi Arabia (HBSA), was due to be completed by 31 July 2017. The first Board meeting was held on 20 June 2017 and a key focus had been to look at how the company reported to the two Corporations, with both colleges undertaking to work together to ensure the same mechanism. This issue would be discussed further and brought to Search Committee as previously agreed. The aim was for the same reporting mechanisms to be used for all of the College's subsidiary companies. In the interests of transparency and openness the HBSA minutes and 2017/18 budget were available on the Governors' Portal. The two Principals were also committed to drawing on lessons learnt and ensuring that the relationship between the colleges outlasted individuals.

Chris Jones, Group Chief Executive, City & Guilds and Chair of Governors Activate Learning visited the College and learnt about digital transformation and the use of technology and learning at Highbury. Mr Jones and the Principal discussed governance, particularly within the context of KSA colleges, and it was agreed that Highbury and Activate Learning Governors could benefit from meeting to discuss these issues further.

The Chair stated that she had very much enjoyed the recent Star Awards and was impressed with the enthusiasm and passion of the staff. Ms Ward stated that she attended the Hair and Beauty Show and that the students had surpassed themselves, particularly the level 3 students.

#### **2600 Use of Common Seal of the Board**

The Clerk presented Paper 2300/17/C setting out recent use of the common seal of the Board. The seal had been used on two occasions, both in relation to the Nescot consortium.

The use of the common seal of the Board was **Noted**.

#### **2601 Minutes of Committees (for information)**

The minutes of the **Audit Committee Meeting** held on 23 May 2017 were **Noted**.

The minutes of the **Finance Committee Meetings** held on 18 April & 13 June 2017 were **Noted**.

The minutes of the **Search Committee Meeting** held on 26 June 2017 were **Noted**.

## 2602 Governor Liaison Visits

The Chair invited members to comment on their liaison visits.

Dr Carter stated that she had had an interesting discussion with Ms T Cole, Managing Director Education & Skills, (Study Programme including English & Maths) and that there was a great deal of focus on retention. Ms Calderbank stated that her summer term visit went well, with the area much more organised than at the start of the year.

Governors' summer term liaison visits were **Noted**.

## Part 3 – Matters of Confidentiality

Minutes 2603 - 2605 were confidential.

### Self-Assessment of Meeting

Seven evaluation forms were returned to the Clerk. Members agreed that papers arrived in time and were clear and concise (one member noted *'progress is being made on highlighting issues – this must continue'*), 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. Six 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 disagreed). One member noted that *'there was an 'in principle' decision re a foreign venture which would have to be considered by Finance Committee'*. 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. One member took the opportunity to raise a point as discussed under Minute 2597 (the ESFA letter and Code of Good Governance) *'I take this opportunity to raise a key point re the Code of Governance to be referred to Search Committee. This is the remaining need to provide Corporation with effective people / HR Report supported by organogram of structure, ongoing Union discussions etc etc.'*

### Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 03 October 2017 @ 5pm.

The meeting ended at 6.30 p.m.