

**Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation
Held at the College at 5pm on Tuesday 04 October 2016**

Present: Ms L Burt (left at 7.20pm), Dr L Carter, Mr M Craft (left at 7pm), Mr P Daneshvar, Mr L Davies, Mrs S Mbubaegbu, Mr A Minter (left at 6.55pm), Ms D Moody, Mr D Roberts, Mr H Slidel, Ms S Ward and Ms N Youern.

Apologies: Ms F Calderbank, Ms D Harrison-Sales, Mr M Lawther & Mr J Rees-Evans

In Attendance: Ms H Brennan - Managing Director, Student Central
Mr G Carter - Head of Higher Education
Mr J Cox - Group Finance Director
Mr S McDermott - Data Analyst Lead
Ms P Schweitzer - Clerk to the Corporation

M i n u t e s

Part 1 – Standing Items

2541 Apologies for Absence

Ms Calderbank, Ms Harrison-Sales, Mr Lawther and Mr Rees-Evans sent their apologies.

2542 Membership

The Chair welcomed Ms Burt, Staff Governor and Mr David Roberts, Student Union President and Student Governor, to their first Corporation meeting. It was **Agreed** that Mr Roberts join Audit Committee.

It was **Agreed** that Ms Debra Harrison-Sales be appointed to Corporation under the general category 2(1)(a) of Highbury College's Instrument of Government for a term of four years from 04 October 2016 to 03 October 2020, and that she join Audit Committee.

It was **Agreed** that Mr Howard Slidel be appointed to Corporation under the general category 2(1)(a) of Highbury College's Instrument of Government for a term of four years from 04 October 2016 to 03 October 2020, and that he join Finance Committee.

It was **Agreed** that Ms Sue Ward be appointed to Corporation under the general category 2(1)(a) of Highbury College's Instrument of Government for a term of four years from 04 October 2016 to 03 October 2020, and that she join Audit Committee.

Mr Slidel and Ms Ward joined the meeting.

2543 Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2544 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 05 July 2016 were **Agreed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2545 Matters Arising

Minute 2532: Prevent / High Needs Briefing: The Clerk confirmed that the SEND Code of Practice did not require a lead governor, just a lead member of staff (the Managing Director, Student Central).

Minute 2534: Principal's Report: The Principal stated that following Finance Committee's request and work carried out by the Chairs of Corporation and Finance Committee, a number of avenues were being explored concerning CRSG, Nigeria: (1) the College was awaiting advice and terms of engagement from a Nigerian law practice; (2) the College was seeking further details from another legal firm who had informed the College that the CRSG Governor in Nigeria was willing to make incremental payments and (3) supported was awaited from the British High Commissioner in Nigeria.

Part 2 –Items for Decision

2546 Review of Standing Orders

The Clerk presented Paper 2193/16/C setting out the annual review of the Corporation's Standing Orders.

The Clerk stated that Standing Orders were reviewed annually in the autumn term. They had been considered by Search Committee on 19 September 2016 and no amendments were proposed.

Corporation's Standing Orders were **Agreed**.

2547 Assurance Statement from Governing Bodies as part of the New Operating Model for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

The Head of Higher Education presented Paper 2198/16/C providing an overview of the College's approach to ensuring the quality of the student academic experience and student outcomes.

In December 2015 HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) required governing bodies to provide assurance on the quality of their Higher Education (HE) provision for the first time. This requirement had been augmented and governing bodies were now required to submit an annual return providing assurance on the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and of student outcomes and the reliability of degree standards. The Annual Quality Assessment Return was required by HEFCE by 01 December 2016. HEFCE acknowledged

that governing bodies might not be in a position to provide a full set of assurances at this time and it would therefore accept partial assurances with an account of action the governing body was taking to reach a position where it could provide full assurance the following year. The submission due in December 2017 would also include an assurance statement confirming that the governing body had received a report confirming the College continued to meet the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).

The Head of HE gave an overview of the quality review processes in place which provided qualitative and quantitative data relating to the academic experience and student outcomes for each academic year and these were compared to national student survey outcomes. He also provided an overview of the reliability of degree standards in 2015/16. One Governor asked about the recent Association of Colleges (AoC) letter referencing the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and what it meant for the College. The Head of HE stated that TEF was a quality assessment model focusing on the quality of student experience and outcomes. It sought to address the fact that whilst universities' research frameworks had traditionally been assessed, the quality of their teaching had not. All HE providers were registered at stage 1 and would have the opportunity to apply for TEF 2 (essentially a quality badge). The Head of HE confirmed that HE provision concerned approximately 100 students. In response to a question, the Head of HE stated that the majority of staff taught both FE and HE, with no specific remission for HE staff. The College was involved in an AoC project to explore interdisciplinary teaching and how good practice could be shared. He noted that the College's pedagogical practice and academic standards had been praised. One Governor asked about the low satisfaction rate reported with computer facilities (67%) and the Principal stated that there had been issues with the network in particular areas last year, but it was generally better this year although some issues remained. Another Governor noted the College's huge improvement against the National Student Survey.

The Head of HE stated that the College was waiting to validate its HE Self Evaluation Documents and once this process was completed, an action plan would be drafted. It was therefore recommended that Corporation give a partial assurance and that the action plan be considered at the Corporation meeting in December. He clarified that assurance concerned continuous improvement, rather than completion of the action plan.

Corporation **Agreed** to provide a partial assurance statement to HEFCE by 01 December 2016.

Part 3 – Items for Discussion

2548 Enrolment Update

Mr S McDermott, Data Analyst Lead, presented Paper 2195/16/C providing an update on 2016-17 enrolment (Ms Ellis was on sick leave).

The 2016-17 16-18 Education & Training allocation (including 19-24 with a Learning Difficulty Assessment) was 1,314 students and the allocation for the Adult Skills Budget was £3,037,805. Adult Apprenticeships

allocation was £907,581 and the 16-18 allocation was £1,889,888. Adult students and apprentices were enrolled all year round. The 2015-16 position was estimated to meet the forecasted budget values.

The current enrolment position for 16-18 students was 1,283, an increase of 50 at the same point in time last year. Late applications were still being received and additional students were likely to be recruited for January start programmes. 1,788 19+ students had been recruited against a 2015-16 equivalent of 1,022 and enrolments would continue all year. All apprentices continuing from the previous year(s) had been enrolled as well as 51 new apprentices meaning that enrolments were up 223 students (43%), however this increase was mainly due to the improved enrolments procedure and timely enrolments of continuing students.

The 2016-17 enrolment process had been well received by staff and students as it was easy to follow and efficient, mainly due to improved organisation and cross-College communication. The Principal emphasised the importance of retaining students as, beyond a grace period of six weeks, the College had to keep students until they had finished their qualification in order to be funded. The 'swop not drop' week gave students the opportunity to try other courses if they were unhappy or felt they had made the wrong choice, rather than drop out.

Corporation **Noted** the enrolments update and the Chair congratulated staff on the situation to date. Mr McDermott left the meeting.

2549 Student Voice Annual Report 2015/16

The Managing Director, Student Central presented Paper 2196/16/C setting out the Student Voice Annual Report for 2015-16.

The report outlined developments in how the College enabled students to participate in decision making and give feedback about matters affecting their learning. The Managing Director, Student Central emphasised that under the new Ofsted Common Inspection Framework, the effectiveness of leadership and management was assessed and this included the extent to which self-assessment was informed via the views of learners, employers and other stakeholders. There was a brief discussion about the numbers involved in the annual Highbury Student Conference. The Managing Director, Student Central confirmed that approximately 50 students attended, noting that it was a relatively small number as students were nominated to attend and it was intended to be a working conference.

The Student Voice Annual Report 2015/16 was **Noted**.

2550 Principal's Report

The Principal presented Paper 2197/16/C setting out the Principal's Report under the headings of the College Vision Plan priority themes.

Priority Theme 1: Student Success, Resilience and Employability

The College had entered students into this year's WorldSkills UK regional competitions, with a total of six students making it through to the national

finals in Birmingham in November. The College had been nominated by Whiteley Shopping Centre and shortlisted for The News Retail and Leisure Award as part of the Highbury Handover event. In July 2016 the Hair and Beauty Therapy Sector was awarded Training Centre of Excellence at The News Hair and Beauty Awards.

Policy developments included GCSE results, functional skills report and government changes. The Department for Education (DfE) would take over education, children's services, skills and apprenticeships, creating a more coherent education agenda but at the risk of decoupling the FE sector's link with skills and the Government's growth strategy.

The Principal stated that the day before the meeting the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) had visited the College. This followed their publication in November 2015 formalising how they would deal with colleges facing financial pressures. The SFA was looking to intervene early and one of the triggers was where a college's financial health had declined, as was the case with Highbury College. Although technically the College did not fall within the scope of the SFA's financial concerns, it was a subjective judgement. Following the visit the SFA would receive the monthly financial monitoring reports and a follow up visit would take place in February 2017. It was therefore important that the College stuck to its robust financial plans. The Principal stated that the visit was not a surprise as the College's Financial Health had declined and SFA was giving a presentation (circulated to Governors) to all colleges and she noted that some colleges in the Solent area were regularly in touch with them. The Chair who was present at the meeting stated that the SFA sought to be helpful, for example advising of policy changes but that they did not provide any tangible help, it was purely a monitoring exercise.

One Governor asked whether this could trigger an Ofsted inspection. The Principal stated that Ofsted were more concerned with quality indicators and where standards had fallen. The Student Governor asked why the College's finances were declining, to which the Principal responded that low recruitment in 2014/15 due in part to a demographic decline, as well as a cut in rates per student last year and an in-year cut for apprentices in April had led to the College's financial position.

Priority Theme 2: Innovation and Enterprise

Two College alumni had just opened a restaurant in Sydney, Australia.

Priority Theme 3: Growth

The Apprenticeship Academy had a busy summer term with new employers, apprentices and relocation to the employment hub at Highbury Northharbour. Achievement was good across many areas with a number of successful external verifier visits. A number of apprentices had been signed up to employers who were new to the College and Highbury apprentices with IBM had been nominated for various national awards.

Solent LEP had recently submitted a proposal to Government to expand the value of the Solent Growth Deal to more than £2 billion. In Portsmouth proposals included transport and energy infrastructure

investments to help the city prepare for the arrival of the new QE Class Aircraft Carriers and unlock new land for development.

Priority Theme 4: Reputation

HEFCE had recently released the results of this year's National Student Survey, with eight of the top ten satisfaction rates being colleges.

Priority Theme 5: Leadership

The Chair of Ofsted, David Hoare, had resigned and Amanda Spielman would take over as Chief Inspector in the new year. The Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Justine Greening MP was seeking to appoint a Chair of Ofqual, the independent regulator of qualifications. Robert Halfon was appointed Apprenticeships and Skills Minister.

Priority Theme 6: Financial Health

Over the coming years emerging regional commissioning bodies would begin to wield greater power over adult skills, although it was not clear to what extent this would mean moving from a grant-allocated system for colleges to a model of wholesale commissioning.

The Principal's Report was **Noted**.

2551 Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire feedback

The Clerk presented Paper 2199/16/C summarising the results of the Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire. The questionnaire had been circulated to all Governors in July 2016 and Search Committee agreed the results would be considered by Governors in the autumn term.

Eight out of ten questionnaires were returned. In summary:

- The majority felt the Board had conducted itself satisfactorily and had done an excellent or satisfactory job;
- The majority felt that the Board's relationship with the Principal & CEO was excellent or satisfactory;
- All respondents rated their individual performance and feedback to the Chair of the Board as excellent.
- The balance of work between Corporation and its Committees was right. Some respondents felt the decision to abolish Quality Committee should be reviewed and all felt that Finance Committee should not be abolished;
- Half of respondents felt Corporation was too big and the majority felt that a Corporation of 12 members would support good discussion and decision making. Other respondents emphasised the importance of the quality of members, attendance and skills.

The Clerk drew Governors' attention to the appendices summarising performance against Corporation's Performance Indicators, attendance and meeting evaluations in 2015-16.

The Chair stated that a number of issues had been raised including how Corporation considered quality issues as well as its size. She noted that

the external auditors were carrying out an internal investigation, an aspect of which was governance performance, and that the results would be considered by Audit Committee in November. She therefore suggested that the report and questionnaire be considered by Search Committee and a governance improvement plan drawn up for consideration by Corporation, emphasising the importance of sufficient time for discussion. The Chair of Finance Committee stressed it was important to look at things in a holistic and timely way and to learn from the outcomes of the internal investigation.

It was **Agreed** that the questionnaire and the forthcoming internal investigation report would be considered by Search Committee and a governance improvement plan drawn up for consideration by Corporation.

2552 Minutes of Committees

2552.1 Search Committee Meetings – held on 19 & 27 September 2016

The Minutes were **Noted**.

2553 Governor Liaison Visits

Links had been allocated on a thematic basis in line with the Common Inspection Framework and Governors would be informed shortly.

Part 4 – Matters of Confidentiality

Minutes 2554 and 2555 were confidential

Self-Assessment of Meeting

Four evaluation forms were returned to the Clerk. Three members did not agree that the agenda and papers arrived in plenty of time and one member noted that the papers were clear but not always concise. Two members felt the Committee received sufficient information upon which to make decisions with one member disagreeing. 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. 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 (one member ticked half way between yes and no). Members agreed that the meeting was clerked effectively. Under other comments, one member wrote '*A number of papers arrived late. This impacted on being able to make decisions. A number of governors left before the end of the discussions which really is a shame especially when important.*'

Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 06 July 2015 @ 5pm.

The meeting ended at 7.25pm.