

BOARD OF GOVERNORS



THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER 2014

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 14 October 2014 GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Author: Clerk

Action: Approve

Status: Open

Present: Robin Mackie (Chair)
Rachel Clark
Judith Doyle
Darren Heathcote
Chris Macklin
John McElroy
David Mitchell
Emily Cox
Catherine Dennis
Ivan Jepson
Nick Hurn
Ian Renwick

In attendance: John Holt
Mark Thompson
Nadine Hudspeth
Chris Toon
Emma Moody (Clerk)

1867 Chair's Welcome/Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

Robin Mackie took the Chair.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Kevin Fitzpatrick and Mark Taylor (and subsequently, Sally Hancox).

The Chair noted for the record his continuing conflict of interest through Smith Electric Vehicles in relation to the Nissan test track and Smith Technologies use of space at Barmston Court

1868 Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10 July 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10 July 2014 were accepted as a true record.

1869 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising which were not covered subsequently on the Agenda.

1870 Welcome to Chris Toon

The Chair welcomed Chris Toon to his first Board Meeting.

The Board were very much looking forward to working with Chris and would receive his papers later in the meeting.

1871 Acknowledgement to Keith Cann-Evans

The sad death of Keith Cann-Evans was noted by everyone as an unexpected and significant loss for the College. His funeral had been held last week and it was a very moving and sad event.

The Chair and the Principal had discussed setting up a memorial in commemoration of Keith which was reflective of Keith as the person, his contribution to Gateshead College and his own personal interest. This may be a scholarship or a prize or some sort of memorial. If governors had their own ideas they should forward them to the Principal.

Keith's great contribution to the College was noted by all Governors.

1872 Principal's Report and Strategic Review

The report was presented by the Principal.

The Principal had attended a meeting with Ofsted's Regional Director at which a good debate was held. One of the key issues was whether or not Ofsted visits should be unannounced; a broader consultation was currently underway.

Governors discussed the merits of Ofsted inspections without notice. The Chair of Audit Committee confirmed that this happened in the Health Sector and he could see it becoming increasingly common in this Sector. Another member commented that, whilst it did ensure you were OFSTED ready at all times, significant staff absences could cause a problem if visits were unannounced.

English and Maths continue to be a clear priority for the Government and funding of colleges is now linked to performance in English and Maths.

A new Skills Minister will replace Matthew Hancock; Nick Boles.

The Principal had continued significant business and stakeholder networking activity. The College wanted to pride itself with having the best links to the business community and potential employers; this was a key area of business strategy and network building and maintaining was crucial.

The College continued its focus on student activity and achievements both sporting and within the local community.

A member asked about the College's work with Northumbria Police and combatting extremism. The Principal confirmed that this had been an extremely useful exercise. It was important for the College to understand ethnic tensions and do all it could to combat racism. The College was wary of any draconian measures being

Agenda No: 2

imposed on it by the Police, but the Principal confirmed that the Police Engagement Officer had been very useful and the College would continue to engage with him. The report was noted.

1873 Learner Performance 2013/14 and projections for 2014/15

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report.

He was presenting the known outcomes only, rather than projections.

The College's apprenticeship provision was strong and above the national rates. There was a need to focus on the length of the students' stay and the push from funders for learners to stay at least 12 months in the College.

He made a comment on the College's work with the RAF where it was difficult to secure longevity due to personnel absence from the UK.

Long level 3 had experienced a significant increase and improvement.

16-18 remained fairly strong, even with a slight dip in apprenticeship performance.

He said that a couple of residual issues still affected the College's data.

The College was experiencing high results which were facilitating students' entry into University.

He had followed up with some College Managers about performance across departments.

He was also pursuing the attendance agenda; Gateshead had 87% attendance rates which was good against Ofsted's benchmark of 80%.

The College had secured better results this year in GCSE Maths and English.

Members confirmed that they had seen an increased level of rigour in exams and grade boundaries being more difficult to achieve.

The Chair welcomed the report and confirmed that he and the Board would give their continued support to the Deputy Principal and the Teaching & Learning Committee under the direction of the Chair of that Committee.

The report was noted.

1874 Ofsted Update and Action Plan

A report was presented by the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality. He had been doing some one to one work with learners. He had also been focussing on staff shifting their attitudes to achieving "good" and "better" teaching. He wanted to see more outstanding provision. He said that the number of students exceeding their stretch targets from those examined were significant. There were still challenges around English and Maths and he made reference to an AOC Report on how to move up a grade.

Malcolm Fraser from HMI was due to visit the College on 25 November.

Agenda No: 2

The College was looking to push for an inspection in this academic year, rather than waiting to the next.

Ivan Jepson and David Mitchell had met with Malcolm Fraser and he had reaffirmed that the direction of travel within the College was the right one.

Governors then had a discussion around whether or not the College should wait for the Ofsted inspection in two years' time and possibly look to move up two grades or whether it was right to push for it this year. It had been concluded that it was better to push for it this year because this would hopefully secure steady and sustainable growth to a grade 2.

Board members were handed a copy letter from Ofsted dated 31 July 2014.

The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality was confident that his self-assessment would show the College at a grade 2 and his view was that the College was in the top 20% of provision in the country.

The Chair confirmed that he felt that the message from the Deputy Principal was encouraging but this Board had remained cautious due to having experienced two negative Ofsted reports.

However he felt that, having received this information, the Board now needed to be more confident and instil confidence into the Executive Team and the staff.

The staff governor said that she was still concerned about English and Maths provision. She felt that many students were still not receiving lessons in this regard. The Deputy Principal confirmed that there was a big push on recruiting new teachers and developing new capacity internally. There was a need to keep teachers convinced that the provision of Maths and English was vitally important.

A member asked the Deputy Principal to confirm whether staff were on board with all of the changes that were taking place. The Deputy Principal said that there had been a shift in attitude particularly around lesson observations. Some teaching staff had been reluctant but everyone now had to engage with the process. This was partly as a result of the Ofsted increased scrutiny and the College being under pressure to improve its Ofsted grading which was the College's key priority at this time.

The report was noted.

1875 Provisional Financial Outturn 13/14

The Report was presented by the Director of Finance.

He highlighted the uncertainty around funding methodology and he also made members aware that the audit was not yet completed. The College was currently predicting a surplus of £18,000. He was continuing with his team, and with the Executive Team, to improve efficiencies.

A letter had been received from the SFA on 7 October which had concluded that the appropriate grading for the College was "good" grade 2. The Principal confirmed

Agenda No: 2

this was an excellent outcome. Putting this into context, many other colleges across the country were being graded 4.

The Chair confirmed that this was as a result of the prudent financial planning going on behind the scenes with the Director of Finance and his team. The Board thanked the Director of Finance and his team.

The Chair of the Audit Committee confirmed that both internal and external auditors liked to see this level of assurance. Colleges can now under accounting rules drop their internal audit function, but this is not something Gateshead College will be doing.

The report was noted.

1876 Quadrant Update

The Clerk presented a paper in relation to the Quadrant reporting system.

The Clerk explained the content of the Terms of Reference and the implications for decision making processes. It was important to remember the context in which the quadrant reporting system was being introduced. It was hoped that this would modernise the governance systems at the College, reduce duplication, place an increased focus around business and people and would also ensure that areas of the College were not operating in isolation.

Members also reviewed the Committee membership for 14/15. Keith Cann-Evans was removed from the list of governors Ian Renwick was proposed as the Chair of Corporate Services Committee and also to confirm his appointment thereby onto Remuneration Committee.

A member asked about observers at meetings of the Teaching and Learning committee. It was confirmed that such observers would only attend by invitation and therefore there would not be an expectation that they attend every meeting. The Committee list would be updated accordingly.

The template Board paper for Exception Reporting was also presented to governors.

After consideration, the governors resolved to:

(a) Approve the attached terms of reference for the four committees:

- Teaching and Learning (replacing the Academic Standards Committee terms of reference)
- Corporate Services (replacing the Finance and General Purposes Committee terms of reference)
- Business
- People

(b) To retrospectively confirm the business that was conducted by Corporate Services Committee on 25 September 2014 and Business Committee on 9 October 2014 in accordance with these terms of reference;

Agenda No: 2

- (c) Authorise the consequential amendment of any other constitutional documents and internal policy documents further to the adoption of the above terms of reference, in particular to refer to the updated terminology and committee membership structure;
- (d) Approve the Board and Committee membership for 2014/15, and appoint Ian Renwick as Chair of Corporate Services and thereby a member of remuneration;
- (e) Note and approve the adoption of the Board template “by exception” report.

1877 Proposed Amendment to the Instrument & Articles of Government

The report is ‘closed to the public’ until such time as it is considered to be no longer commercially sensitive

1878 Special Resolution to amend Articles of Knowledge Multiplied

The report is ‘closed to the public’ until such time as it is considered to be no longer commercially sensitive

1879 Minor Changes to Standing Orders

A paper was presented by the Clerk.

After consideration it was resolved to amend the Standing Orders to remove the requirement to obtain the consent of the Secretary of State when granting property interests to members of the Board – recent legislation no longer requiring this. This was subject to conflicts of interest being managed and also any trustee benefits being authorised by the Instrument & Articles.

1880 Redundancy/Consultation update

The report is ‘closed to the public’ until such time as it is considered to be no longer commercially sensitive

1881 Business Development Strategy and impact on financial performance

The report and the record of discussion ‘are closed to the public’ until such time as they are no longer commercially sensitive

1882 International Update

The report and the record of discussion ‘are closed to the public’ until such time as they are no longer commercially sensitive

1883 Any Other Business – CLOSED AND CONFIDENTIAL

1884 Date of next meeting

Thursday 11 December 2014 at 4.30 pm

Agenda No: 2

1885 Chair's Review of Business

The Chair confirmed that he thought that this was now exciting times. We should consider the new quadrant reporting structure as an opportunity to rejuvenate the way in which the College is governed. He wanted to extend his thanks to the Executive Team and all Board members for their support and enthusiasm for the year ahead.