

HILLS ROAD SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Corporation

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 2 December 2015

Present:

Corporation Members

Peter Southwick (Chair), Jonathan Culpin, Ian Harvey (agenda 9-12), Dinesh Jacob, Anna Moore, Johnnie Sam (agenda 7-12), David Secher, Linda Sinclair, Julie Taylor

Clerk to the Corporation

Robert Smith

Observers

Jill Aberdour (Assistant Principal – Resources), David Jones (Assistant Principal – Planning & Quality), Jo Trump (Deputy Principal), Francesco Dernie (Student Observer)

1 Apologies for Absence and Quoracy

Apologies for absence had been received from the following members of the Corporation: Peter Brindle, Edmund Brookes, Uvini Edirisinghe, Edna Murphy and Frankie Williams.

The meeting was quorate.

2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made in relation to the business to be transacted.

3 Minutes of previous meetings – 13 July 2015 and 28 September 2015

The minutes were approved as a correct record of the business transacted, and *prima facie* evidence of the proceedings to which they relate.

4 Matters arising from the Minutes

None

5 Draft Minutes of Committees

The following committee minutes were received for information:

Audit	10 November 2015
Search and Governance	14 October 2015

6 Governance Self Assessment

A paper, prepared by the Clerk to the Corporation and previously considered by the Search and Governance Committee at the meeting held on 14 October 2015, was considered.

It was noted that the outcome of this assessment is included in the College's Self-Assessment Report (SAR).

It was further noted that the Committee had considered:

- attendance at meetings;
- whether or not the Corporation and its committees had considered the correct range of business;
- whether or not there had been clarity regarding the respective roles of members of the Corporation and College management in decision-making;
- whether or not business had been transacted efficiently and effectively;
- whether or not the skills, knowledge and experience of members of the Corporation had been harnessed effectively to fulfil the Corporation's responsibilities;
- the extent to which the Corporation had encouraged a culture of continuous improvement in its own performance; *and*
- how the Corporation had demonstrated the effectiveness of its contribution to the College's levels of success.

In its consideration the Committee had taken account of:

- factual evidence (principally, attendance at meetings and evidence of formal compliance with regulations);
- findings of a survey of members' 'levels of satisfaction' conducted in August 2015;
- the matters forming the business at meetings of the Corporation and its committees; *and*
- the quality of relevant deliberations.

Members approved a recommendation of 'Outstanding', and noted the Committee's recommendations as follows:

- members appointed to committees be reminded of their obligation to attend meetings that have been called with adequate notice; *and*
- members be encouraged to participate actively in the Governor Link Scheme.

7 College Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

The draft College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) prepared by the Assistant Principal (Planning and Quality) using data originating across the College was received for information and discussion.

Thanks were given to those who had contributed to the report.

It was noted that:

- a new descriptor, 'Personal Development, Behaviour & Welfare' had been added to the table of College self-assessment judgements to align it with the revised Ofsted Inspection Framework;
- a new performance management framework (individual teacher 'dashboards') had been developed during 2014-15 to reflect the new pay structure and pay progression framework for sixth form colleges;
- in parallel with these 'dashboards', the College had also developed corresponding reporting measures at subject and department levels; *and*
- the table of teaching department self-assessment judgements shows generally outstanding or good provision, but with 3 aspects (out of 288 measured) judged to require improvement or to be on the verge of inadequate.

In relation to the College's achievement during the year it was noted that:

- over 90% of the College's students progress to higher education with significant numbers entering the most competitive courses;
- the College's students obtain degree classifications significantly above those for the generality of students (e.g. at least 31% obtain first class honours by comparison with 21% for all state schools and colleges and 18% for independent schools), thereby demonstrating how the College effectively prepares students for life at university;
- A/AS level examination results for 2015 were similar overall to those achieved in the two previous years, but with some notable improvements, including a record A* grade rate of 19.5% at A level and the College's strongest AS results since 2007;
- the College was again the highest placed sixth form college in published tables based on the 80% A*-B rate at A level in 2015, such that it is likely to retain its ever-present position at the top of the Government performance table based on points per examination entry;
- 36% of leaving students achieved at least grades AAB at A level in at least two facilitating subjects, such that it is likely that the College will remain at the head of the Government's 'facilitating subject' table for sixth form colleges; *and*
- according to the Government's level 3 value added measure (L3VA), the College's value added continues to be significantly positive overall at both AS and A level, and positive in most subjects – in the 2015 tables the College's results place it at the head of post-16 value added tables in Cambridge, and fifth among all sixth form colleges.

Members additionally noted that:

- the College has recently become a strategic partner within the Cambridge and Suffolk Schools Alliance (CASSA), maintains its active participation in the Cambridge Area 14-19 Partnership (CAP), participates in a peer review and development group comprising Hills Road and 3 other high performing sixth form colleges, and is also a founding member of The Maple Group (comprising twelve leading sixth form colleges working together to share, develop and promote excellent practice); *and*
- two independent studies of economic impact and value for money suggest that for every £1 invested in the College by the Government, the overall net benefit to the economy is at least £20.

Targets for 2015-16 proposed in relation to the SAR were approved.

Members approved the SAR for upload to the 'provider gateway'.

8 Area Review

A verbal update was provided by the Chair of the Corporation. He reported that:

- funding had been obtained from the Education Funding Agency to undertake a pilot project examining the scope for collaboration with other comparable providers, in particular Long Road Sixth Form College; *and*
- report dates had been agreed in outline with the project's facilitators.

The Government's provisions for multi-academy trusts in the sixth form college sector were noted.

The Chair of the Corporation undertook to circulate a written update to members.

9 Strategic Plan Update

A paper prepared by the Assistant Principal (Planning and Quality) was received for discussion.

Members particularly noted matters arising since the Government's Autumn Statement on 25 November 2015, namely:

- the national funding rate per student is being protected in cash terms until May 2020, though the impact of inflation will reduce its value in real terms by up to 8%;
- Formula Protection Funding due to be withdrawn at the end of 2015-16 may possibly be continued for a further year, yielding an additional sum of more than £500,000 to the College;
- other funding adjustments had not yet been set out in detail, but are promised in the near future;
- sixth form colleges will be afforded the opportunity to become 16-19 academies, thereby allowing them to recover non business vat costs – relevant official guidance will be published in February 2016;
- on the basis of discussions with officials from the Department for Education, the Sixth Form Colleges' Association's current view is that:
 - the area review process will be the means by which applications for academy status will be considered;
 - there is no guarantee that academy status will still be available to sixth form colleges after the reviews have been concluded;
 - the main criterion for conversion to an academy will be the strength of existing and future collaborative relationships with other providers, particularly schools and existing academies;
 - successful applications will have to specify how academy conversion will add value to existing collaborative relationships and benefit a greater number of young people;
 - multi-academy trusts (MAT) are the Government's favoured model, but involvement in a MAT will not be a pre-requisite for conversation;

- a legal structure capable of accommodating a range of different providers *will* be a pre-requisite for conversion – simply changing the legal status of an existing sixth form college will be insufficient; *and*
- bank loans and other liabilities will not be a barrier to conversion, since funding will be available to cover the costs of conversion with applications being considered on a case-by-case basis.

It was further noted that:

- there is no longer the same financial imperative to recruit as many as 100 additional year 12 students in 2016 but a reasonable level of growth is desirable because of the generally reduced size of the new A level curriculum, the additional space provided in the new classroom block, and the redeployment of the current Mathematics area for infrastructure enhancements (including study space);
- because of the new A level curriculum there will be spare teaching capacity which, where possible, should be redeployed;
- each additional student will bring net extra income of a little over £2000, albeit not in the first year;
- any net growth in income would, with a year's 'lagged' delay, offer protection against cuts and the erosion of funding through inflation, enable some additional funds to be directed to areas in need of further investment (e.g. the College IT infrastructure), and assists the protection of the breadth of the College curriculum by targeting additional places for 'curriculum balance' subjects and others vulnerable owing to the change to a linear A level structure; *and*
- the impact of 'lagged' funding is felt in the year in which student numbers are increased (i.e. the funds to support them are not received until the following year), which may result in deficit budgets (e.g. an increase of 100 student in 2016-17 would yield a deficit budget of c.£70,000 – an increase of 70 would yield a break even budget).

It was agreed that:

- a 'balanced budget' target for the Group be retained for the year 2016-17;
- the College Strategy Team use its best judgement to determine the level of year 12 growth for 2016 which best serves the full range of the College's strategic interests; *and*
- the level of growth is set between 0-100, and be consistent with the above 'balanced budget' target.

The Corporation further agreed to ascribe a modest degree of tolerance to the target operating surplus (e.g. at a level equating to c. 0.3% of the College's annual income), meaning that a marginal deficit of up to £30,000 will still be regarded as meeting the breakeven target.

10 Development Agendum: Employability and Productivity

This was development agendum not forming part of the business of the meeting.

11 Any Other Competent Business

It was suggested that in future years consideration be given to holding the December Corporation meetings on an evening other than Wednesday owing to the traffic conditions typically pertaining on that evening in advance of Christmas.

12 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 16 December 2015 commencing 6.30pm.