

Full Governing Body meeting 19 May 2009 at Ashington Campus 5.30pm

Meeting preceded by showing of video on farm plans

<p>Present: Linda Ions Rachel Ellis-Jones Michael Jeans Tony Shirley Ian Todd Chris Smith Kate Morrison Peter Sample Mark Rossi Prof Fleming N Hall Mags Barnfather</p> <p>Apologies: Robin Casson</p> <p>In Attendance: Helen Wright Chris Todd, John McCormack (for first item only)</p>	
<p>The meeting was confirmed to be quorate and there were no interests noted. The Chair noted that John McCormack from the UCU had made a request prior to the meeting to speak to the Governors and on behalf of the Governors the Chair had welcomed the opportunity to hear from him.</p> <p>John McCormack UCU: John McCormack was the Chair of UCU for the College and was also speaking for Unison members. He thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the meeting on the concerns of the staff over the VR process and where the process would go from here to find a way to make savings that was not incompatible with staff interests in job security. He said there was general dissatisfaction with the level of consultation with Unions, the process followed and lack of consultation with staff on the process and inaccuracies in information given. He also explained that there was a perception of a communication problem. A document had been leaked that noted the College had buildings that were “not fit for purpose” and this was perceived as being damaging to reputation. He also noted that the Principal had put forward a plan for redundancy over a longer period but that governors had shortened the period. He asked for assurances that the financial problems would be dealt with by other means than compulsory redundancies. The Chair thanked him and outlined the seriousness of the financial position the college was in and noted if he wished Chris Todd could meet with representatives to go over the figures for the next three years. She noted that the Governors had reluctantly but unanimously agreed to the VR process because of the serious financial position and that whilst the VR process was not closed no decision could be taken on compulsory redundancies. John McCormack asked that the threat be lifted and particularly over the summer holiday, the Chair assured him that the timing was not cynical it was simply a response to the serious financial position and that the savings needed to be made immediately not over a long time frame. There was discussion on the processes and it was noted that there was a proper joint committee in place and it was meeting regularly and had the information needed. There was an agreed consultation schedule and this was going ahead as planned. John McCormack left the meeting**</p>	

<p>The Chair noted that this was an opportune time to discuss the VR process with Governors and opened the floor for questions or comments. Ian Todd noted that redeployment was an important consideration and had unions been engaged with on this issue. All agreed that the threat of compulsory redundancy could not be lifted in the present climate until the outcome of the VR process was known. David Fleming noted that the governing body was committed to achieving savings and that the VR process should be re-invigorated to attract as many as possible and that consultation should be opened up if necessary to allow for more contact with Senior Management. Rachel and Chris noted that the process had been done according to the rules and agreed with unions and all info had been given. They did not agree with J McCormacks comments on lack of info available. Michael Jeans and Ian Todd noted to general agreement that in his opinion all VR applications should be accepted. M Rossi noted that as a staff member he could comment that the concern was that the compulsory redundancy letters would be sent out during the summer recess, Rachel and Chris noted that this was not planned and not the way they would want to do things, the VR process might bring about all the savings anyway and there would always be consultation. There was some discussion on the need to redeploy people to new areas which TUs could assist with.. Helen commented that she and Peter Caudren had undertaken training with middle management to help them manage the process and emphasise it was not a competency issue for staff. Linda agreed to write to the union to reply to the points raised. She also noted that there was the likelihood of industrial action to be prepared to face this and also the involvement of the press. She also confirmed on behalf of governors that they supported the SMT in this process.</p>	
<p>Minutes of last meeting: These were agreed and action points dealt with.</p>	
<p>Chair's Comments: The Chair noted some forthcoming dates for the diary.</p> <p>Meeting with new Governors 28 May at 5.30</p> <p>Retreat further planning 29th may am at kirkley</p>	
<p>Principal's comments: The Principal reported on Aoc National meetings she had attended: planned cut in adult funding to feed into long term planning, lobbying on new build with local MP's carried out, ofsted conference with useful information.</p> <p>Rachel reported on current thinking about outcentres, both curriculum planning and cost and this would need to be looked at by Governors in more depth.</p> <p>CONFIDENTIAL there were some moves with the local authority to put the adult learning out to contract and some discussions had taken place but this would probably be subject to tender and obviously due diligence would need to take place.</p>	

<p>5. Minutes of committees: Audit – the new auditors were very keen and putting high standards on the team which needed to be met.</p> <p>Search – new governors were being sought and Peter Sample was due to retire but had kindly agreed to stay until the July Corporation meeting</p> <p>F&P – nothing to add.</p> <p>Audit 24/3, Search 3/3, F&P 31/3</p> <p>All AGREED MINUTES WERE ACCURATE AND ACCEPTED.</p>	
<p>7. HE Partnership with Sunderland University: Prof Fleming declared an interest in this item as a member of staff at Sunderland University with involvement in the partnership project. Prof Fleming outlined that the idea behind this project was to take the current partnership further involving the County Council as well and an agreement to go forward on that basis had been entered into with the three parties. It would lift the profile of HE in the county and secure learner numbers, the agreement sent to Governors had not yet been signed so any amendments could still be made. It was a long term partnership that should have a very positive impact on the College in the future securing numbers of HE learners across the county and Rachel agreed it was the first step in a big venture. The County were very excited about the prospect of labelling HE provision with the Sunderland brand. The meeting AGREED THE DRAFT AGREEMENT.</p>	
<p>6. Voluntary Redundancy programme: Chris outlined the numbers so far which were encouraging. The numbers would go to the Finance committee for details, the period was likely to be extended to improve numbers.</p>	<p>Chris to check notice period not added on to terms of redundancy</p>
<p>8. Management Accounts and LSC funding impacts: Chris noted the financial headlines as set out in his paper and members expressed their concern at the level of deficit. The problems with the funding allocations were ongoing and making it difficult to see the picture for next year. The VR process was extended. He would expect to be in a better position by July to see the likely deficit. He had met the LSC to ask about a cash advance based on the restructure and work done on recovery. There was no definite answer about recouping lost capital spend costs although there was now confirmation that the fees element would be repayable, but there was hope the LSC would refund some of them and they had said they would look at the bank fees on the loan as well. Chris said that the important point about the budget next year was that it was tied to the curriculum plan and this was making managing the budget at a lower level more feasible. Kerry had been working hard to manage the debt and collection was coming in.</p>	
<p>9. New build options : Rachel noted that the new build decision was still not finalised, the questionnaire that had been completed required that the site was ready to be “spade ready” in three months for eligibility and this was not the case for the College. She and the team were lobbying all parties as the College was an exceptional case. The situation was very fluid and changing on a daily basis. The LSC meeting on 3 June would decide who would go forward. There were some issues that the Board would need to decide on : Bank loan and overdraft: there were penalties on the loan if it were not drawn down and the bank needed a decision prior to the 3 June meeting of the LSC, the</p>	

<p>loan would cost £6-700k to finance annually. The board would have to decide if the loan could be cancelled. ALL PRESENT AGREED TO CANCEL Planning permission: at the stage the new build had been “parked” the planning permission was not finalised for technical reasons, and work would need to be done to secure planning , this was complicated by the fact that the County Council had now changed. There was also the question of other capital build plans : the new building was to be a catalyst for change, the fabric of the existing building was deteriorating and expensive and the perception of the College would not change without a new building of some kind. There was a need for a new strategy and it was suggested that a committee be established to look at this or use the existing new build committee. (N Hall leaves at 7.45). The Governors needed to look at the fundamental issues of who the College should serve and where, should the College become smaller or aim for the whole County. Savings could be made by retrenching but this was not in the vision of the College at the moment. There was general discussion of the opportunities offered by closer partnership with the Council for example use of premises, delivery in a different way. The conclusion was that the Governing body would need to meet to look at these issues for next year and the Chair and Principal would meet to see how this could be taken forward prior to the next Governing Body</p>	
<p>10. update on restructure: this item was dealt with above.</p>	
<p>Confidential items – local authority adult education ideas in Principal’s comments.</p>	
<p>Date of next meeting 14 July 2009</p>	

<p>Chair to write to unions</p>		
<p>Chair and Principal to discuss how to deal with need for governors to input on future plans for new build</p>		
<p>Chris to check notice period not added on the redundancy notice</p>		

