

Northumberland College Corporation

Governing Body

Minutes of meeting held on 18th December 2007 at 5.30pm at Ashington

Present: L Ions (Chair)
P Sample
R Ellis-Jones (Principal)
S Barlow
I Todd
P Pratt
M Rossi
Z Lethbridge
C Smith
L Gazzani
R Casson
N Hall

In Attendance: Joanne Applegarth (Watson Burton minute taker)
Sarah Barratt (Watson Burton trainee solicitor)
I Holmes (VP Finance)
H Wright (VP Curriculum)

GB07/122 Apologies

Standing apologies were given for Eric Fisher. Apologies had been received for M Jeans, C Taylor, J Wright, L Scott and D Fleming.

GB07/123 Declaration of Interests

None.

GB07/124 Confirmation of Quorum

The Chair confirmed that the meeting was quorate (the members present meeting the minimum requirement of 5).

GB07/125 Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 18th September 2007

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

It was noted that the matter arising under GB07/103(F) had been raised and that a response had been received.

Minutes of the Governing Body extraordinary meeting held 16.10.07

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record

Matters arising

GB07/125The principal reported that consultation is now complete and the outcome will be discussed at the Retreat

GB07/126 Matters arising and not otherwise covered on the agenda

It was confirmed that the support staff restructure was complete save for one part which was outstanding and that all admin/internal posts had been confirmed.

Item GB07/118 - learner involvement. MR and DFer are to report back at the first meeting after February 2008.

REJ

MR/DFer

GB07/127 Comments from the Chair

The Chair informed Governors of the following matters:-

- (a) The new Governors – Chris Smith, Zena Lethbridge, Robin Casson and Laura Gazzani were welcomed to the Corporation.
- (b) Governors JC and DR had resigned and had been presented with gift vouchers at the Christmas Dinner. LI formally recorded thanks for their contribution over a number of years.
- (c) LI had been asked by the LSC to report that they were pleased at the amount of progress the College had made in the last year and that the improvements seen were impressive.
- (d) It was noted that LI sat on the Board of Connexions as a nominee for the College In April 2008 NCC will take over funding and have placed the contract for future provision to IGEN, a Leeds based company. There was some discussion surrounding the concerns regarding IGEN, given that the College are in competition with them regarding training services provided. Such concern was noted by the Chair.
- (e) LI attended the Wansbeck Business Awards, Young Achiever Awards, LSC Colas Awards and NTA Awards during the period of October/November 2007. It was noted that the College needs to be more pro-active to submit applications for such awards.
- (f) LI confirmed that the sale of Seventh Avenue and the Art Department had been finalised.
- (g) LI confirmed that she had attended the graduation at Kirkley on 9 October 2007 and expressed thanks to IT/PP.
- (h) LI, PP and REJ attended a joint meeting with Tyne Met Governors and Principals and agreed to a half day event in the New Year including 5/6 Governors from each College to look at strategic objectives between the two Colleges. No date has yet been finalised but the Governors will be informed when it has.
- (i) LI confirmed that she attended the AOC Conference on 20 – 22 November 2007 with REJ and HW. John Denham gave a speech indicating a scenario planning exercise on the size and shape of future Colleges would take place in the new year.
- (j) . LI and REJ are now Trustees for the Ashington Learning Partnership. Minutes are available from the principals secretary if interested

LI

GB07/128 Comments from the Principal

REJ provided the following comments:

- (a) The business and possible topics to be covered at the Retreat (document 07/08 tabled). Comments To Rachel by the first week in January would be appreciated REJ stated that Kevin Smith and Helen Groves were on standby to attend.
- (b) REJ is to get copies of the strategy update meeting with Chris Roberts (Executive Director of Learning Skills North East) and is to circulate the paper that has been given to staff.

REJ

REJ provided the following further comments:-

- (a) Staff and students recently travelled to Japan to represent the College. German students had also attended the College and this was seen as very positive particularly in light of the Government focus on global education/wider horizons.
- (b) The College has received increased press/media coverage due to the assistance by the Internal Communications Department.
- (c) It was noted that there would be a large agenda for the new year. The application to the LSC for the new developments would take up a large proportion of January 2008.

GB07/129 Management Accounts

LI requested that this matter be dealt with at this point in the meeting, together with item 16, dealing with student enrolment. (Appendix 9)

IH presented the Enrolment Report. The significant shortfall in the 19+ learners category was noted. An action plan is to be worked on during January to attempt to increase enrolment. IH stated that a budget reforecast must be submitted to the LSC by 31 January 2008.

REJ noted that the HE numbers were up.

IH presented the management accounts. IH noted that staffing costs were a significant area and the College was well ahead of budget in this respect. Governors were directed to the commentary which indicates what impact the annual pay rise would have on the accounts.

Governors expressed concerns on income and over-staffing. After a lengthy debate it was agreed that:-

- The deficits are of some concern, particularly in relation to overstaffing
- There is to be a re-forecast done including sensitivity and phasing and IH is to report to the Corporation on 22 January 2008.

IH

GB07/130 Approval of Accounting Policies

IH presented the accounting policies stating that there was a requirement that the document be approved before the annual report is accepted.

After a healthy discussion the accounting policies were approved by the Board.

GB07/131 Acceptance of Annual Report and Financial Statements

IH tabled the document and stated that LI had four copies to be signed which constituted a final version of the accounts. The full document was available to the meeting

It was noted that the Audit Committee wanted to flag up the issue of the cost balance now being below 30 days. This is to be monitored on a regular basis relating to the number of days surplus.

IT made the point that in the annual report the Governors have to make a statement about having confidence in the internal control systems – statement of corporate governance and internal control. IT stated that he wanted to go back to this when the audit report was raised in the meeting later.

It was noted that the audit report was unqualified.

GB07/132 Update on Curriculum Strategy and Planning 2008/2009

HW presented the report and it was confirmed that Governors had read the details. After a lengthy discussion it was decided to discuss the issues at the Retreat. The paper and its contents were noted, in particular the useful summaries it provides.

GB07/133 Final Summary of 06/07 Development Plan

HW presented the plan and stated the importance of the document in terms of the role of the Governing Body. The report was received to the meeting.

GB07/134 Self Assessment Report

REJ confirmed that this item was due to be tabled. However, the external verification process had been delayed until today.

REJ stated that the proposal was to put it on gateway as draft as last year so as to meet the deadline of 31 December 2007 and a draft would go to the next Standards Committee meeting for detailed scrutiny. The process will then be formalised and the draft status taken away.

GB07/135 New Build/Site Review

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GB07/136 Proposed Developments at Kirkley Hall

REJ tabled the development paper and after some discussion the Governors gave approval to discuss the proposal with the LSC. PP raised the issue of student accommodation at Kirkley Hall. REJ commented that such a proposal at this stage may be a step too far in obtaining LSC funding.

GB07/137 Minutes of New Build Committee held on 8 October 2007

The salient parts of the meeting were highlighted. The minutes were received to the meeting.

GB07/138 Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 10 October 2007

It was highlighted that this meeting discussed the issues regarding the Learning Park and that there was a request that Governors agree to the release of staff to enable county-wide bids. IT requested that the Governors give permission and delegated authority to deal.

GB07/139 Minutes of Finance and Personnel held on 13 November 2007

The salient parts of the minutes were highlighted and the recommendation not to make charitable donations was agreed. The minutes were received to the meeting.

GB07/140 Minutes of New Build Committee held on 19 November 2007

The minutes were received to the meeting.

GB07/141 Draft Minutes of Audit Committee held on 4 December 2007

SB highlighted the salient parts and a particular item at AC07/061 regarding the annual internal audit report. She stated that although the internal report was weak it was not necessarily a true reflection of the position. They were prepared to give an unqualified audit report and re-visit weak areas in early Spring.

It was noted that in light of what the external auditors said, the work done by the external auditors had been relied upon to allow the assurances statement to be signed. LI is to check the wording before signing. This issue was considered and noted.

LI

GB07/142 Draft Minutes of Membership and Governance Committee held on 12 December 2007

Confirmation was given by PP that the new Governors had been placed within the committees subject to their confirmation. The new governors confirmed that they were happy with the recommendations
CT is to inform new members of the dates of the sub-Committees and provide a list of names of the individuals on the sub-Committees.

Clerk

It was also noted that the Staff Governor LS would be stepping down and that an election is to take place in January for this position.

MR confirmed that there should be a new second Student Governor in the New Year.

GB07/143 Topics for the next Corporation Meeting

1. Learner involvement (March) - MR
2. Learning Park update
3. Kirkley proposal
4. Re-forecasting of accounts

(REJ to update Governors on the outcome of the LSC meeting relating to the Learning Park and Kirkley developments).

Clerk

REJ

GB07/144 Any other business

IH tabled the capital expenditure request document for approval. IH described that he is seeking approval to spend up to £22,125 for at least 60 new car parking spaces. A discussion took place regarding the viability of this being done on the existing playing field. Planning issues were raised and IH is to check with planning consent regarding the proposals. Subject to planning the Governors approved the proposal.

IH/Clerk

GB07/145 Designation of items of confidential if required

The Learning Park Site is to remain confidential.

GB07/146 Date of future meeting

The next meeting will be held on 22 January 2008.

The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

ACTION LIST

Reference	Content	Managers
10.7.07 GB07/080 Gender Equality etc	Update in 6 months on staff training and if any difficulties had arisen.	D Fer
18.9.07 GB07/107 Capital expenditure	LI to speak with DF re: capital expenditure and the responsibilities of F&P and New build committees.	LI
18.12.07 GB07/125 Governors meeting	REJ to write reply to LSC letter regarding the ILR.	REJ
18.12.07 GB07/126 Matters arising	Update to Learner involvement in February 2008.	MR/DF
18.12.07 GB07/127 Comments from the Chair	Governors to be informed of the date of ½ day event with Tyne Met Governors and Principals.	LI
18.12.07 GB07/128 Comments from the Principal	Comments to REJ re Agenda items for Retreat by January 2008 REJ to circulate strategy update paper.	REJ
18.12.07 GB07/129 Management Accounts	Reforecast including sensitivity analysis to be reported to the Corporation by 22 January 2008.	IH
18.12.07 GB07/141 Audit Committee Recommendations	Wording of statement to be reviewed before signature.	LI
GB07/142 M&G Committee	Clerk is to inform new members of committee/dates and provide a list of names. Clerk to take steps to elect a new Staff Governor.	Clerk
18.12.07 GB07/143 Topics for next Corporation Meeting	REJ to update Governors re outcome of LSC meeting.	REJ
18.12.07 GB07/144 Any other business	Planning issues and consent to be checked – re the car park.	IH