

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
held on 30 March 2017 at 9.00 am

¹PRESENT Mrs E Bolton (S); Mrs Z Carter (E); Mr M Coombes (E);
Mr R Fawcett (E); Mr A Hoad (E); Mr N Hopkins (E); Mr T Jackson (P);
Dr R Palmer (E); Miss A Robbins (St); Mr G Tabcart (S);
Mrs J Venables (E); Mr S Ward (E); Mr C Wilson (E).

In attendance: Mr S Horrobin, Director of Finance
Mr M Simmons, Deputy Principal
Mrs S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES AND MEMBERSHIP

28. Apologies were received from Mr S Morgan.
29. **Resolved** – that Miss Charlotte Duffy, a student at Andover College, be appointed as Student Governor from 30 March 2017 for the period of her enrolment at Sparsholt College Hampshire (the College) and be appointed as a member of the Curriculum, Employers & Market Requirements Committee.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

30. The Principal noted that, with regard to any discussions at Board and committee meetings relating to funding by the Enterprise M3 LEP of the Hampshire Centre for the Demonstration of Renewable Technologies, although he was a member of the Enterprise M3 LEP Board he had no involvement in funding decisions by the EM3 LEP Board which related to the College.

MINUTES

31. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meetings held on 8 December 2016 (Part I, II and III) and 26 January 2017 (Part I and II) be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

32. The Board had received the report of the Chairman which summarised activities he had undertaken since the previous meeting of the Board and upcoming events and matters requiring his consideration.
33. Responding to a Member's question, the Deputy Principal reported that the Risual Academy was being progressed through the appointment of a new IT teacher and promotion of the apprenticeships offer with employers.
34. The Chairman noted that Mr Tabcart would be standing down as a Staff Governor on 5 April 2017 when he left the College and thanked him for his service to the Board.

¹ (E) = External; (P) = Principal; (S) = Staff; (St) = Student

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT AND STRATEGIC PLAN

35. The Board had received the report of the Principal providing an update on progress towards achieving the three-year objectives of the current Strategic Plan and against the annual milestones for 2016/17.
36. The Board noted the progress against the Three Year Strategic Plan Objectives and that progress on the Annual Milestones was good at this point of the year, with no “major” Annual Milestones unlikely to be achieved by year-end. Responding to a question about the annual milestone 42 in relation to extending the zoo programme in SE Asia, the Deputy Principal confirmed that the target was to reach an agreement by July.
37. The Board discussed the summary of key performance aspects of delivery of the curriculum. Responding to a Member’s enquiry as to whether the FE retention rates remaining approximately the same as at the same point the previous year represented a positive outcome, the Principal explained that College management were always seeking to improve retention, including through the work of the pastoral tutors and others in supporting students. The Board noted the reported action to strengthen the consistency of how the pastoral tutor role functioned on the Sparsholt College campus.
38. Members discussed the continuing rise, year on year, of the numbers of students with mental health conditions and the increasing demands on the College, including in relation to students with more severe diagnoses. It was noted that, although the College had strong relationships with external agencies, health and social care provision in the community was stretched and this placed more pressure on the College. It was also recognised that reaching college could be a positive step for some young people with mental health conditions.
39. A Staff Governor asserted that training for teachers in how to deal with mental health behaviours during teaching sessions was important and the Deputy Principal confirmed that mental health awareness training would continue both for members of staff and the student community. It was also suggested that the employees of the College’s main contractors who came into frequent contact with students might benefit from mental health awareness training.
40. The Principal reported that changes to the requirements in relation to Maths & English were anticipated as being announced shortly and the Board noted that the new GCSE grade 4 would be classed as a “standard pass” and that grade 5 would be classed as a “strong pass”. The Deputy Principal confirmed that, in line with other sixth form colleges, students at Andover College would require a grade 5 in order to study specialist A level subjects.
41. The Board also noted updates in relation to the delivery of work experience and the use of the College owned social media platform WAMedu.

COLLEGE HEALTHCHECK REPORT

42. The Board had received the latest College Healthcheck Report (no. 2017/03). There were no matters arising which were not covered on the agenda.

COLLEGE POLICIES

43. The Board had received the report of the Deputy Principal on the outcome of the reviews of four College policies.

44. Members discussed the proposed section on Fitness to Study which was recommended for inclusions in the FE & Apprenticeships Admissions Policy and sought to balance the College's duties in relation to learners with special educational needs and disabilities and the need to support the wider College community. Members considered whether legal advice should be sought on the drafting of the policy to protect against any risk of legal challenge and decided, on balance, that the additional costs to the College were not justified given the assurances provided by the Deputy Principal as to the alignment of the policy with practices in other colleges and with relevant legislation, and that there was no history of legal challenges.
45. The Deputy Principal agreed to redraft the Fitness to Study section to reflect the points raised by Members, including inserting the option of a DBS check in exceptional circumstances and cross referencing to the Student Code of Conduct.
46. **Resolved** – that the following policies be approved with the further amendments agreed:
 - a) Partner Colleges – Supply Chain Fees & Charges Policy for ESF Programme;
 - b) Associate Delivery – Supply Chain Fees & Charges Policy;
 - c) FE & Apprenticeships Admissions Policy;
 - d) HE Admissions Policy

OFFICE FOR FAIR ACCESS (OFFA) AGREEMENT 2018/19

47. The Board had received the draft OFFA Agreement for 2018/19, including the HE fees and bursaries policy.
48. The Deputy Principal explained that student number data and the targets and milestones were to be finalised before the OFFA Agreement was submitted.
49. The Deputy Principal highlighted the analysis of the 2016-17 cohort which showed that 24% had home addresses in Polar3 Quintile 1 and 2 and 49% had BTEC qualifications.
50. Members discussed the references to retention and suggested that the benefits of HE to the student outcomes also be articulated. Members sought clarity on the opportunities described for the College to address equality characteristics, such as low representation in the HE sector of white males from lower socio-economic groups, and suggested this be cross-referenced in the section on groups targeted for more participation. The Deputy Principal undertook to consider these points when finalising the Agreement.
51. Asked about the references to the development of the HE offer at Andover College, the Deputy Principal explained that this had begun with the new HNC in Performing Arts and that opportunities were being explored for HE programmes which could utilise existing resources and make a sufficient contribution. Curriculum developments would be reported through the Curriculum, Employers & Marketing Requirements Committee (CEMR), as normal.
52. In response to a Member's question, the Deputy Principal also agreed to check the breakdown of tuition fees listed in the Agreement was correct in relation to the inflationary increase of £250 between 2017/18 and 2018/19.
53. **Resolved** – that the 2018/19 OFFA Access Agreement, including the HE fees and bursaries policy, be approved on the basis that it be finalised by the HE Strategy Group prior to submission.

FINANCE

54. The Board had received the report of the Director of Finance providing an update on the College's in-year financial position and the two year financial plan (2016/17 and 2017/18). The October Management Accounts were received separately.
55. The Board noted that mid-year financial forecast of the 2016/17 financial year showed a surplus of £360k, with further gains anticipated from the sale of Westley Cottages properties. However, income for 2017/18 was likely to be reduced from that included in the two year financial plan approved by the Board in July 2016. College management was looking at options to reduce costs in 2017/18 in order to mitigate the income shortfall.
56. The Director of Finance & Facilities highlighted the future financial risk presented by TPS and LGPS pension costs, noting that this was an issue across the FE sector.
57. The Board discussed the capital spend budget and process by which the budget was derived and investment decisions taken. Asked by a Member if the income from property sales was being ring-fenced, the Director of Finance & Facilities explained that it could not be accounted for within the statutory accounts separately but that the Board has resolved that the income be reinvested in the College estate.
58. The Principal confirmed that capital spend was reported to Resources Committee in updates to the Property Strategy and through the management accounts commentary.
59. The Board noted that, under the Standing Orders provisions for urgent action, the Chairman had approved additional unbudgeted capital spend of c£50k which was required to order furniture for the halls before the summer and a parent access portal which was planned to be established prior to the start of the Autumn term. The Board was being asked to approve an increase in the capital spend budget for 2016/17 to cover this.
60. **Resolved** – that the capital spend for 2016/17 be increased from £900k to £950k to cover the purchase of two items ahead of the next financial year.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

61. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 2 March 2017 and the Risk Register Dashboard.
62. The Chair of the Audit Committee highlighted areas to note from the minutes, including the audit of IT General Controls and the additional information requested by the Committee from the auditors on comparison with the FE sector and from management in relation to the mitigation of potential risks.
63. The Chair of the Audit Committee also reported the outcome of the annual performance review of the internal and external auditors, explaining that he had written to the internal audit partner to seek reassurance about some areas of service provision. Subject to the response being satisfactory, the Audit Committee had recommended the reappointment for a further year of both the internal and external auditors.
64. **Resolved** – that the College reappoint RSM as internal auditors for a further year from 1 August 2017, once the Chair of the Audit Committee had confirmed that a satisfactory response had been received to his letter, and KPMG as financial statement/regularity auditors for a further year to cover the completion of the 2017/18 statutory accounts, subject to agreement of reasonable fees by the Director of Finance.

CURRICULUM, EMPLOYERS & MARKET REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE

65. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Curriculum, Employers & Market Requirements Committee (CEMR) held on 16 February 2017.
66. The Deputy Principal reported that the College had not yet received confirmation of its apprenticeship allocation, which had been expected in March.
67. Referring to the marketing discussion at CEMR, the Vice Chairman explained that the issue of differentiation of the HE brand had been raised at the HE Board of Studies which he had attended. The Deputy Principal reported that the artwork for the new University Centre Sparsholt identity had been developed and included in the new HE prospectus. The website was also being developed. However, he acknowledged that there was more to do.
68. A Member raised a question about the use of different nomenclature for the College, its two campuses and now the University Centre Sparsholt for all HE provision. While acknowledging that various shorthand titles were used internally, the Principal suggested that this was not an issue externally where Sparsholt College and Andover College had clear identities, as did the College's sub-brands.
69. A Member noted that the EM3 and Solent LEPs were updating their Strategic Economic Plans and suggested the College should seek to ensure that these included a focus on relevant local skills needs. The Principal confirmed that he and the Vice Principal – Corporate were engaging in discussions with the LEPs.

QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

70. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Quality & Standards Committee (Q&S) held on 9 February 2017.
71. The Chair of Q&S drew the Board's attention to the Committee's discussions of the in-year FE performance report and the detailed scrutiny of some issues identified during recent quality reviews.
72. Referring the discussion of HE quality and performance, the Chair of Q&S welcomed the scrutiny of quality that he had witnessed when attending the HE Board of Studies.
73. The Board noted the submission by the College of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2017 report and that the report had been circulated to members of the Board for information.
74. The Board also noted the receipt by the College of an updated agreement with HEFCE and the section on governance arrangements.

Policies

75. Members discussed the revised Social Media Policy and sought clarity on the current usage of social media platforms by learners and staff and whether these were accurately described in the policy.
76. A Staff Governor suggested that a College LinkedIn presence could be useful in, for example, maintaining contact with former students and should be included in the list of permitted social media sites.
77. The Principal explained that the Policy sought to limit the types of social media used by staff in order to help staff to ensure clear boundaries between work and non-work related information. Members agreed with the importance of maintaining boundaries between

- personal social media usage by individuals and the professional use of social media between staff and students, and acknowledged the evolving nature of social media.
78. Asked whether the current policy appeared to have been effective or whether significant issues had arisen about use of social media, the Deputy Principal confirmed that the policy had been working well.
79. The Student Governors agreed that WAMedu was a good communications tool but explained that it was not always used as much as it could be by students, for reasons such as students managing storage on their phones.
80. The Deputy Principal undertook to redraft the references to social media and to add an appendix to the Policy with a list of acceptable social media in order that this could be reviewed and updates agreed by the SLT without need for referral to the Board.
81. Responding to a Member's question about use of images, the Deputy Principal confirmed that the families of students were asked to give permission as part of the enrolment process for use of images of students under 18 years old by the College. However, he recognised that the College could not control how students used their own images, other than through encouraging use of the College's WAMedu site rather than other commercial social media forums.
82. **Resolved** - that the following policies be approved:
- a) HE Quality Enhancement Policy
 - b) HE Student Engagement Policy
 - c) HE Scholarly Activity Policy
 - d) HE Student Charter
 - e) Social Media Policy, with the agreed revisions.

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

83. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 9 March 2017 (Parts I and II).

Human Resources

84. The Chairman reported the discussion about staff pay at the Committee, noting that although affordability remained a significant constraint on providing an all staff salary increase, it had been proposed that the Board consider at its July meeting whether there would be sufficient forecast surplus in the 2016/17 financial year to make a provision within 2016/17 to award a one-off payment to all staff (pro rata) in the following year.
85. The Director of Finance & Facilities reported advice from the College's auditors that such a decision would be allowable in accounting terms provided the amount was authentically calculated and committed. Any decision would also need to be subject to confirmation that it did not present a risk to compliance with the banking covenants.
86. Members agreed with the planned approach, noting that a report on pay strategy would follow to the Resources Committee in the Autumn term and asking that this include references to the local cost of living and to recruitment of and competition for key skills.
87. **Resolved** – that it was not affordable at the current time to award all staff a pay increase and that College management would provide an update in the Summer term, and a full report in the Autumn term, on options for awarding a percentage increase or a flat rate

unconsolidated one off payment to all staff (on a pro rata basis) in order to recognise their continued professionalism and commitment.

88. **Resolved** – that the Local Government Pension Scheme (LSPS) Discretions Policy Statement be approved with no amendments.

Property Strategy

89. The Chairman highlighted the discussion at the Resources Committee meeting of progress with the Property Strategy and noted that it was intended to cover some strategic property matters at a future Governors’ Seminar.
90. **Resolved** - a Capital spend of c£200,000 plus VAT be approved in advance of the 2017/18 budget year for equipment and activity required to be procured and ordered before 31 July 2017 to be in place for the start of the Autumn term 2017/18.
91. **Resolved** – that the Environmental Policy Statement be approved with a minor clarification of wording.

WELLBEING COMMITTEE

92. The Board had received the unconfirmed minutes of the Wellbeing Committee held on 3 March 2017 and noted the information provided on equality & diversity, health & safety and safeguarding (including PREVENT).
93. The Principal reported that further revisions were required to the revised Offsite Policy & Procedures and the Hazardous Pursuits Policy documents circulated to the Board and it was agreed to withdraw these policies from the meeting.
94. The Principal explained proposals to update the Safeguarding Learners Policy to include the addition of a new definition of Child Sexual Exploitation and to update the Whistleblowing Policy to include reference to the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline and other minor updates.
95. **Resolved** – that the revised Safeguarding Learners Policy and Whistleblowing Policy be approved.
96. Members sought further information on the development of “lock down” procedures by College management and were supportive of the need to be prudent and to have appropriate procedures in place in the event of a violent incident on either campus.
97. The Principal confirmed the continuing focus on embedding an understanding of British Values throughout the College and the challenge of building awareness of radicalisation in a way that was relevant to student’s lives.
98. Asked whether the College’s insurance would cover damage to property or people as a result of violent action by an individual on campus, and whether this would be defined as an “act of terrorism” in insurance terms, the Director of Finance & Facilities undertook to investigate further and to report to the Audit Committee at a future meeting.
99. Members were supportive of the management’s plans to further reduce smoking on both campuses, while recognising the challenges in enforcing no smoking zones. A Student Member gave the example of students congregating near the entrance of the Sixth Form Academy to smoke, instead of at the nearby smoking shelter.

GOVERNANCE

100. The Board had received the report of the Clerk updating on governance matters and appointments to the Board.
101. The Board considered the external governance developments reported, including the introduction of a new insolvency regime to the FE sector and the publication of the new Post-16 Audit Code of Practice for 2016/17. Members discussed the potential implications of the new insolvency regime and noted that training for governors was being planned for 2017/18.
102. **Resolved** – that Gary Rake be appointed as Staff Governor for a term of office of four years commencing on 1 May 2017 and be appointed to the Quality & Standards Committee
103. **Resolved** – that the Area Review Working Group continue to be constituted for the time-being to oversee matters arising from the review of land-based provision in the south of England and that the revised terms of reference approved.

CULTIVA

104. The Board noted the minutes of the Annual General Meeting and Board Meeting of the Cultiva Ltd Consortium and the annual report and accounts which had been received for information.
105. Confidential items discussed are recorded separately. The meeting closed at 1.20 pm.