

## THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER

### MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY held on Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2010 at 10.25 a.m.

Present: Mr G R Baird, Prof C Behagg, Revd. G Bridgewater, Mrs V Chaffin-Laird, Dr D Cassell, Mr C P Clementi, Mr C J Eley, Mr M Hodgson, Dr J Johnston (Principal), Mr A R C Lane, Mr R Pope, Mr E I Tattersall, Mr H Underwood, Mr A Vourexakis, Mrs C Watson

In attendance: Mr I F Dumbleton (Director of Finance), Mr S P Nicholls (Vice Principal), Ms N Whitehead (Clerk)

Apologies received: Ms S Bridges, Mr S van der Borgh, Mr C J P Watney

In the Chair: Mr G R Baird

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*The meeting was preceded by presentations by Mr S A Martell – Assistant Principal (Progress) and Mrs M J Russell - Assistant Principal (Support) on both Equality and Diversity and Safeguarding*

#### **948. Declaration of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **949. Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business

#### **950. Minutes**

The minutes (Parts I and II) of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2010 were approved.

#### **951. Matters arising**

**Item 933:** The Chair commented on the work to-date in the meeting room in response to the successful Wolfson bid and the Principal confirmed that appropriate purchases had been made ahead of the VAT increase.

#### **952. Strategic issues: Government Education Policy**

*Paper: AoC Chief Executive letter 44/10*

The Principal outlined the main developments in government policy and the potential impact on the college (as recently discussed with those governors present at Planning Day) including:

- The commitment to closing the 16-19 funding gap and the promise of common 16-19 performance measures to ensure fairness between schools, sixth forms and FE college 16-19 provision;
- The replacement of the YPLA by an Education Funding Agency (EFA) with the continuation of a separate agency for Adult Education and Work-Based Learning;
- The introduction of an English baccalaureate to encourage a broad range of subjects at GCSE;
- A continuing commitment to raising the participation age to 18 by 2015;
- A growth in academies with an implied reduction in the role of the local authority;
- Ofsted inspection to focus on achievement, quality of teaching, leadership and management and behaviour and safety in those institutions considered most in need;
- The end of EMAs from January 2011 with no clarity as to what might replace them, at least in part;

- The introduction of thresholds which could affect the college's position as a lead provider of WBL and Adult Education if lobbying to exclude SFCs were unsuccessful;
- The government's intention to limit immigration for Level 3 courses which could impact on the college's ability to recruit international students;
- An increase in HE fees to up to £9k from 2012.

The key concern for the college was the potential impact of many of the above measures on student numbers and as such, in turn, college funding. There was lively discussion in particular on the impact of higher HE fees on demand for A level and vocational courses and the balance of the curriculum. Governors commented that it would be increasingly important for the college to provide guidance on the choices available to prospective and current students and to reassure them and their parents on the full implications of and effective management of student debt. The Principal advised that the college already ran a Personal Finance course but might consider more generic support through the tutor system.

### 953. Report from the Nominations Committee

*Paper: Minutes of the Nominations Committee meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010*

- a. The Governing Body noted that the current terms of **appointments by the Court of Assistants** were both due to end in March 2010. Mr Pope had indicated a wish to stand down as a governor but would continue his association with the college as Chair of the Trustees. The Privileges Committee would be considering the reappointment of Mr Watney in the New Year and efforts were underway to find a replacement for Mr Pope.
- b. **The trustees** had reappointed Mr Baird and Mr Eley as foundation governors for a term of four years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011.
- c. Mr Mark Watts had indicated his wish to stand down as the **co-opted member of the Audit Committee** owing to work pressures. The Governing body thanked him in his absence for his efforts on behalf of the college.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the appointment of Mr Robert Yorke as the co-opted member of the Audit Committee with effect from the Spring Term.**

- d. **Training and Development policy:** The Clerk explained that this new policy largely set out current practice but also introduced a number of enhancements including a formalised governor training programme to seek to ensure governors felt fully equipped to play their strategic role. As per the other policies on the agenda, all had been assessed for their impact on equality and diversity.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Governor Training and Development Policy.**

### 954. Appointment of Trustees

The governors noted the reappointment by the Court of Assistants of Messrs Robert Pope, Chris Watney and Duncan Watney as trustees. In terms of nominations by the Governing Body, they understood that Mrs Cowley no longer wished to continue as a trustee and were pleased to note that Mr Pope had written to thank her for her distinguished service.

**Resolved: the Governing Body approved the nomination of both Mr Hodgson and Mr Eley as Trustees.**

*[11.20-11.40 a.m. The meeting took a short break during which the Revd. Guy Bridgewater left the meeting]*

## **955. Report from the Audit Committee**

*Papers: Minutes of the meetings of the Audit Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> October and 15<sup>th</sup> November 2010; Internal Audit Annual Report to the Audit Committee 1 August 2009 to 31 July 2010; Internal Audit Strategy August 2010; Audit Committee Annual Report 2009-2010; Financial Management and Control Evaluation 2010.*

### **a. Internal Audit Annual Report**

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported that the auditors had used 19.5 of the 21 days planned – to include and raised no significant issues over the year. She hoped that the Committee's efforts to change the format of the report made it easier for the whole Governing Body to grasp the nature of the minor recommendations made.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Internal Audit Annual Report.**

### **b. Appointment & Remuneration of internal auditors 2010/2011**

The Chair of the Audit Committee explained that the Committee were satisfied with the performance of the Internal Audit Service (IAS) and believed their relationship with the college to be a constructive one.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the appointment of Grant Thornton as the Internal Audit Service provider for 2010-2011, at a cost of £10,500 plus VAT.**

### **c. Internal Audit annual plan 2010/2011**

The Chair of the Audit Committee explained that 18 audit days were proposed for 2010-2011, of which all had been allocated.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Internal Audit Strategy 2010/2011 with one amendment.**

### **d. Learner Number Systems Audit 2010-2011**

The Chair of the Audit Committee explained that the Audit Committee was in agreement with the Principal and Director of Finance in considering it prudent to continue to undertake a Learner Number Systems audit carried out by an independent auditor.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the appointment of Grant Thornton to carry out an audit of Learner Number Systems in 2010-2011 (within the allocation of days covered by the Internal Audit Strategy).**

### **e. Audit Committee Annual Report to the Governing Body**

The Chair of the Audit Committee explained that the Committee was happy with the financial information it reviewed and the controls in place against an uncertain regulatory background. The Committee was assured that the grading of "good" on risk management continued to reflect effective risk management.

**Resolved: The Governing Body endorsed the Audit Committee Annual Report to the Governing Body.**

### **f. Financial Management and Control Evaluation.**

The Chair of the Audit Committee explained that following the first substantial FMCE in 2008, the College was able once again to submit a short report given the continuation of its grading of "outstanding". The improvement plan reflected discussions with the IAS and the wish to continue to ensure excellent financial management.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Financial Management and Control Evaluation.**

## **956. Report from the Finance & General Purposes Committee**

*Papers: Minutes of the F&GP Committee meetings on 28<sup>th</sup> September and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010; Minutes of the Premises Sub-committee meetings on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010; Minutes of the Joint Staff-Governors' Consultative Group meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2010.*

### **a. Quarterly Management Accounts**

*Paper: Financial Report for the period from 1st August 2010 to 31st October 2010*

The Director of Finance confirmed that the quarterly management accounts showed a surplus of £66k against a budget deficit of £59k. This was primarily owing to higher 16-18 student numbers compared to budget. The current ratio was 1.60:1 with 88 cash days in hand. Staff costs as a percentage of income were 67.4% (budget 71.2%) and as a percentage of recurrent income 77% (budget 80.2%) As such the college was at this stage hoping to exceed the budgeted surplus. However the Principal updated the Governing Body on the current state of play with pay negotiations with two of the main teachers unions having rejected the offer of 0.75% with a view to securing a pay increase more in tune with 2.3% award made to schoolteachers. Clearly the outcome would be significant in terms of college finances.

**b. Student Voice policy:** The Principal confirmed that the policy reflected both well-established and more recent innovations in providing an opportunity for student input and feedback. The operation of the policy would be monitored through the Q&S Committee.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the new Student Voice Policy**

### **c. Health and Safety Policy:**

Members commented on the need to ensure that both effective reporting of 'near misses' be included in staff training and that the policy was appropriate in its use of the terms Premises Manager and Health and Safety Officer particularly as these roles were both currently carried out by the same person.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Health and Safety Policy subject to the Clerk undertaking a review of the terms used.**

## **957. Report from the Quality & Standards Committee**

*Papers: Minutes of the Quality & Standards Committee meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2010; Draft College Self-assessment Report (SAR) 2009-2010 December 2010; Self-Assessment Report (SAR)2009/10 - Governance; Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) – Governance 2011*

The Chair of the Quality & Standards Committee confirmed that the draft minutes were a fair reflection of the recent meeting which had considered the following issues:

### **a. The College Self-assessment Report**

In discussing the SAR, the Chair reported that the Quality & Standards Committee had recognised that the college judged itself against very high standards and had once again achieved the best results ever and, most notably, in performance relative to prior attainment. As such the college could be judged to have improved since the last Ofsted inspection which had awarded an 'outstanding' grade. All cross college grades were now considered 'outstanding' and the improvement in curriculum grades for Liberal Arts and Maths reflected progress in the college's efforts to achieve a consistently high performance in the 'significant minority of subjects' referred to in Ofsted's 2009 desk review. The Chair understood however that, whilst observing the line between strategic and operational issues and having every confidence in senior management in their rigorous approach, members would want to be assured that the college was continuing to address those subject areas requiring attention so that students had a consistently excellent experience. The Committee would be continuing to monitor this through the QIP and exception reporting. In the meantime the SAR was considered a very good document which reflected the college's 'outstanding' position and which it was hoped would give confidence and freedom to staff in striving to build on the college's firm foundations.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Draft College Self-assessment Report 2009-2010.**

**b. Governance Self-assessment Report 2009/2010**

The Chair outlined the strengths and very few weaknesses identified in the Governance SAR. Members agreed that whilst clarity on new government education policy was a key area for development, this had been an area beyond their control. Considerable effort had been made throughout the year to keep abreast of developments and adapt strategy appropriately, albeit that decisions and blue sky thinking had been made more difficult by political and economic uncertainty. The Principal commented that she felt governors had achieved a good balance between listening to management input and providing strategic direction. The results of the recent individual survey were encouraging in demonstrating that governors were not complacent about their role and would continue to question and strive for improvement on their performance. It was agreed that whilst attendance at Governing Body meetings was slightly down on the previous year, Committee attendance had been particularly high and it was at these meetings that there was the best scope to discuss strategic issues in detail. Members who had been present at the recent Planning Day commented on its particular usefulness in considering options for the way forward as government policy affecting the college began to emerge in a number of key areas.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Governance Self-assessment Report 2009/2010** (with a Grade 1 (Outstanding) within the context of the outstanding grading for the leadership and management of the college.

**c. Governance Quality Improvement Plan 2011**

The QIP was considered comprehensive in identifying key areas for development focussing on being well informed on the development of the policy and funding framework within which the college would be working.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Governance Quality Improvement Plan 2011.**

**958. Report & Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010 and Management Letter**

*Papers: Report & Financial Statements – Year ended 31 July 2010; Management Report for the year ended 31 July 2010*

The Chairman of the Governing Body explained that both the Finance & General Purposes and the Audit Committees had recommended that the Governing Body approve the Management Letter and the Report & Financial Statements. The Director of Finance explained that the college remained in the financial health category of “Outstanding” within the Framework for Excellence and was fortunate to have ended 2009/10 with a surplus of £270k.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Report and agreed that the Chairman of the Governing Body should sign it on behalf of the Governing Body. It also approved the Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010 and agreed that they should be signed by the Chairman of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body and the Principal on behalf of the college. It approved the Management Letter for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010.**

**959. The Principal’s Report**

*Paper: Principal's Report to the Governing Body - Autumn Term 2010*

The Principal reported that:

- i. There had remained uncertainty following the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on how public sector funding cuts would impact on the college but the recent Education White Paper was at least providing some clarity on the wider policy issues. There was a focus on ‘freedoms’ as demonstrated by the encouragement of academies but it was yet to be seen whether these would prove an opportunity or risk to the college.

- ii. The pressures on HE and EMA might be significant in terms of student interest in the college offer at a time when the college's funding could probably be best protected by growth. The challenges for the college would be to adapt its curriculum and adjust the timetable in order to meet demand.
- iii. The admissions process this year had been highly successful in terms of increasing numbers without undue adverse impact on set sizes or staff workloads;
- iv. The success rates for the college had been the highest ever with 97% at Level 3 and 90% at Level 2. Students had also been excelling in extra-curricular activities with the girls hockey team worthy of a particular mention. The SFBac would be a means of encapsulating this wider experience and achievement.

## 960. Chairman's Report

*Paper: Governor Training Report 2009/10*

Members noted the training undertaken to-date by both Governors and the Clerk particularly in relation to the MOG changes, as well as the good attendance at Planning Day which had been useful in focussing on the college's key aims. The Chairman urged members to continue to give their full support to the college through attendance at formal meetings, training opportunities and wider college events.

## 961. Student Voice

*Papers: Minutes of the College Council meetings held on 28<sup>th</sup> September and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010*

The Student Governors reported that:

- i. Students had taken very well to the new college security officer who had worked hard to get to know the students, not least through talking to a College Council meeting;
- ii. This year's Rag 'Week' was a success with £2,000 raised for the Chestnut Tree Hospice.
- iii. It was hoped that the prom in the shape of a boat trip would go ahead in 2011;
- iv. Students had been performing well in their leadership of societies particularly in Humanities and Liberal Arts;
- v. Further to the visit by Henry Smith, students were keen to debate the increase in tuition fees and understand better the Government's perceived advantages in the changes. Students had taken part in peaceful protests but were advised of the need to avoid unauthorised absence.

Members congratulated the students and thanked them for their efforts in raising money for charity.

## 962. Trustees' Report

The Chairman of the Trustees explained that the Trustees had last met on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010. Prizes totalling £3200 were agreed to be awarded to some 26 students at Prizegiving. The Trustees had received a report from the fund manager (Cazenove) and were pleased to learn that, whilst slightly below the benchmark, the value of the endowment portfolio had held up well in terms of income earned. Approval of the accounts had raised the issue of distribution of capital which trustees would prefer to avoid unless 'in extremis' and with a plan for repayment. This cautious approach was being felt throughout the Mercer portfolio.

## 963. Election of the Chairman & Vice-Chairman

The Clerk explained that, prior to the meeting, she had received 5 nominations from governors for Mr G R Baird to be re-elected Chairman of the Governing Body for a further year. There were no other nominations.

**Resolved: It was agreed unanimously that Mr G R Baird should be elected Chairman of the Governing Body for one year with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011.**

The Clerk explained that, prior to the meeting, she had received 5 nominations from governors for Mr C J Eley to be elected Vice-Chairman of the Governing Body for a year. There were no other nominations.

**Resolved: It was agreed unanimously that Mr C J Eley should be elected Vice-Chairman of the Governing Body for one year with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011.**

**964. Any Other Business**    None

**965. Governance Quality Framework**

*Paper: Quality Framework: Governance Self-assessment*

Governors studied the quality framework and considered that:

- Students interests had been at the heart of lively discussions on aspects of government education policy and their potential impact on the college curriculum, widening participation, equality and diversity. Members had benefited from a range of perspectives including that of the student governors and the challenges facing HE;
- Whilst the college's funding position was still not known, it was clear that considerable challenges lay ahead in allocating more limited resources effectively so as best to avoid undue impact on staff and students;
- Members had been conscientious in monitoring self-assessment of the college as a whole and of governance itself;
- Governors had comprehensive information both in paper and face to face briefings from senior staff which had enabled them to make well-informed judgements.

Overall members felt the meeting had been very effective in allowing frank and timely discussion of key issues whilst ensuring compliance issues were dealt with effectively.

**966. Date of the next meeting:**

Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2011 at Mercers' Hall at 11.00 a.m.

The meeting closed at 13.10 p.m.

Chairman .....

Date .....

NCW 8<sup>th</sup> December 2010