

THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER
MINUTES OF
THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 18th NOVEMBER 2019 at 16.15.

Present: Mrs Sally Bromley, Mr Tom Cox, Mrs Ann Donoghue, Mr Graham Lawrence, Mr Paul Mittendorfer, Dr David Skipp, Mr Robert Yorke, Mr Sam Uzzell

Apologies received: N/A

In attendance: Mr Ian Dumbleton, Ms Andrea John, Mr Steve Martell, Mr Richard Rothwell (for agenda items 5 and 6 (mins 2307 and 2308), Ms Nicola Whitehead

In the Chair: Mrs Ann Donoghue

The Chair welcomed Mr Graham Lawrence to his first meeting of the committee. Members were content with the proposed consent items. The Chair also spoke for all in expressing sadness at the Principal's announcement to staff that day that she would be retiring at the end of the year.

2304. **Declaration of interests** None.

2305. **Minutes** of the meeting held on 24th June 2019 were approved.

2306. **Matters arising** (Covered by agenda items)

2307. **Collyer's International Strategy**

Paper: International Student Report 2019 including Strategic Actions update

The Principal explained that the College had **recruited 67 international students** in September 2019. The new strategy also sought to offer a new **more flexible approach to course design** to include a summer short course to prepare for UCAS applications and particularly Oxbridge, a cultural integration programme with nearby Rikkyo School and a year's non-examination course with Swiss students as well as the collaboration with Guangya School in China. The latter was now in its second year and would incorporate a 2 week January pre A level course programme in January. The **results and destinations of the Guangya students** completing A levels in 2019 **had been very pleasing** with 4 students returning to Hong Kong, one to Shanghai and 28 continuing to well-respected UK HE institutions.

The Deputy Principal (DP) reported on his recent visit to Hong Kong where there seemed to be increased interest in studying in a less politically charged environment and in the pastoral support offered at Collyer's. In the interests of integration, the College would not be pursuing a 'Collyer's International' brand but there would be a targeted prospectus for Easter 2020. A **new Social Media Strategy in Summer 2020 would be mobile- rather than app-focussed**. The new Director of Admissions and Marketing (DoAM) had also been **building closer relationships with overseas agents**, not least through more regular communications.

The Finance Director (FD) reported that the gross income from international students anticipated in 2019/20 was currently **£538k** and the **net income** (excluding overheads calculated to-date at £24k) was **c. £334k** which reflected expenditure on agents' fees and similar arrangements with local institutions. At **broadly £5k per student**, this was very favourable. (*Action: Principal to include gross and net income figures in next internationals report*)

Members noted that UK universities were seeing a similar trend in interest from Hong Kong students (with reduced interest in the US). Asked about capacity and the possible need to prioritise between UK and international students, the Principal explained that the proposed **GB2 building would resolve capacity for both UK and international students**. That said the College was aware that the offer of shorter rather than solely full-time courses did cause some **peaks in demand which required careful management**. The VP (Support) was also aware of the need to create capacity for sufficient pastoral support to these students. Feedback was sought to seek to assess what was the optimum balance of provision.

2308. **Website update**

The DoAM explained that a key element of the College's marketing strategy had been significantly progressed through the **launch of a new website** the previous week. This project had begun in early April following a test of the market. The company chosen had a good track record with education institutions and was well-tuned into the College's profile and needs. In response to a question from the Committee Chair, the DoAM felt that Collyer's had received **vfm with a suitably tailored package**.

Demonstrating the site, the DoAM outlined the intention to create a **less cluttered, image led site, reflecting natural user journeys without making wholesale change**. The branding better reflected the **history and heritage** of Collyer's to include the Mercers' maiden. The structure and content sought to meet user priorities with, for example, **ready independent access to information for international students including pastoral support as well as enrichment activity such as sport and the numerous news items**. Recommendations from the recent internal audit report, for example on page labelling had been taken into account and the site had been well tested to ensure smooth access from multiple browsers. The site was designed **to be regularly and easily updated by the College**.

Members thanked the DoAM for his explanation and efforts in taking the project forward.

2309. **Report from the Estates Sub-Committee (and Health and Safety Committee)**

Paper: Minutes of the meetings of (25th September 2019) and 4th November 2019; HNW/Amiri Phase 1b and 3 costings; Analysis of pros and cons of alternative CIF bids

Members noted the position with regard to the **final account for GB1** and further communications with the loss adjuster subsequent to the ESC Committee. They welcomed the **successful completion of the planned maintenance programme (on budget and on time reflecting effective systems)** to include two specific projects to roofs and windows to the Grammar School and Buckle buildings. They heard too that work was underway in **planning the Digital Hub** with the aim of awarding the **contract by the end of March with completion by end August**. Further to the ESC the Principal had just met with the Architects and Heads of Subject to discuss design and user needs.

Turning to the **forthcoming Condition Improvement Funding (CIF) round 2020**, the Principal outlined consideration of the **potential scope** of the College's bid taking account of the limited feedback from the last bid (that the costings appeared high and the expansion element insufficiently evidenced) as well as the ESFA's approach to assessing bids. The **consensus**, following consultation with the ESC, HNW Architects and the bid-writer, now **favoured a bid for support for GB2 only**, rather than include Phase 3, the Art Block as before. This would facilitate a more focussed bid with **stronger evidence on project need** than had been possible the previous year given recent growth combined with future projections. The lower College contribution required to secure maximum points on this criterion (changed from 30% to 10%) was helpful. Whilst a new build by 2022 would be favourable, it was not however the intention to go ahead without significant Government funding.

Asked about two separate projects being a new option since the ESC discussion, the Principal confirmed that this had been explored. This carried the risk however that funding would be provided for the lower cost and lower priority project. More particularly **it was not possible to bid for two expansion projects and the Art Block was not a clearcut 'Condition with expansion' project. The proposed bid for GB2 only was therefore considered a lower risk approach.** Members noted that the **deadline for bids**, which involved a quite complex online process, was noon on **13th December**, immediately after the next Governing meeting. As such it was proposed that the bid be approved by written resolution (*Action: Clerk to produce draft*)

Recommendation: That the Governing Body approve by written resolution prior to their next meeting:

- i) A CIF bid for funding for GB2 only;**
- j) A contribution of £250k from the College.**

The Principal informed members of the offer of a former Principal to provide a sculpture commemorating Shelley which could adorn **GB2**. As such she proposed that the building **be named the Shelley Building and the Graham Baird Building (GB1) be known simply as the Baird Building**. Members asked about the design and suitability of the sculpture for the site and whether there needed to be a proviso given the uncertainty of funding for GB2, whilst noting that mutual completion in 2022, as favoured, would be fitting as it would coincide with the bicentenary of Shelley's death.

Recommendation: that the Governing Body also approve by written resolution the revised names of the Shelley and Baird Buildings.

2310. **Report and Financial Statements**

Paper: 18/19 Outturn v Forecast report; Report and Financial Statements 2018-19; Audit Findings Report; ESFA letter re Financial plan; ESFA benchmarking dashboard report

The Finance Director reported that the College had achieved a good **operating surplus of £120,000** as reported in the management accounts. **After making a non-cash charge of £207,000 in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), the deficit for the year was £87,000.** The College had a healthy cash balance at 31st July 2019, sufficient to meet creditors of £1.8 million, a longer term loan of c. £0.6m as well as a contribution to its Property Strategy, most immediately in the shape of the Digital Hub. Based on the College's forecast outturn for the **year ending 31 July 2019**, which had now been agreed by the external auditors, the **ESFA funding body had assessed the College's financial health grade as 'outstanding' and the expectation that the forecast outturn for 2019/20 suggested the same grading.** Members noted that the dashboard was already out-of date given recent funding promises, suggesting that the financial grading for 20/21 would improve from 'good' to 'outstanding'.

Members raised a number of questions about the performance indicators, the Governing Body's involvement in risk management, an erroneous governor attendance figure and the recently announced funding premium for science and maths. (Action: Finance Director to liaise with RSM over amendments to include a form of words from the Principal on the latter).

They also **sought explanation of the drop in operating income** (due to the receipt of S106 money the previous year), **the treatment of the £151k 'little extras' funding and the make-up of the £207k pensions adjustment. (Action: FD to provide subsequent explanation to ESC Chair on the latter given the complexity).**

Recommendation: That the Governing Body approve the Report and Financial Statements at their next meeting (subject to any comments from the Audit Committee).

2311. **Management Accounts**

Paper: Financial report for the period 1st August to 30th September 2019

Members noted the **year had started reasonably well with a deficit of £60,234 at end September, £23,735 more favourable a position than budgeted**. Payroll costs were slightly under budget and non-pay expenditure by c. £18k, this however owing to timing differences. During the second term, there would be a significant amount of unbudgeted additional income from short courses. The **outturn for the year would much depend much on the outcome of the current national pay negotiations**. The FD updated the Committee on the end October figures which showed a c. £8k positive variance against budget. This reflected the recent receipt of an invoice for £36k from an agent which had not been anticipated but was, on examination, justified. The FD had discussed the College process with the new DoAM to ensure that effective relationships with overseas agents would prevent a recurrence.

Recommendation: That the Governing Body approve the first quarter Management Accounts (once prepared).

2312. **Treasury Management Report and Investment Strategy**

Papers: Treasury Management Report and Investment Strategy

The FD explained that this second annual Treasury Management report was intended to give a regular update on college practice albeit that the situation was inevitably dynamic in response to, for example, interest rates and cash needs. **Money held on deposit was held with 3 well-rated institutions to help spread any risk. Higher rates of interest were generally not considered viable given that this would hamper flexibility**. Asked about the Collyer's very strong performance against the 40 day cash target, the FD explained that this was a common target across the sector reflecting the need to meet a month's salary costs plus extras. He was comfortable with the College's current figure of 212 days given that this reflected front-loading of funding. The **Principal's investment strategy** considered the position going forward in more detail.

The Principal explained that the strategy previously discussed by F&GP had been updated to reflect **greater clarity on some issues such as certain elements of funding though not Brexit nor the current pay negotiations**. It was **hoped that a future CSR would provide some certainty over a longer period**. As such the Committee was not in much better a situation to judge an appropriate investment strategy and was unlikely to be so until at least the outcome of the next CIF round. This would inform, for example, whether it was prudent to clear the current loan given that the interest on this (c. £3.5k per annum) was more favourable than was probable in any new loan arrangement and there were no covenants attached. **Members agreed the status quo pending further review post CIF decisions (Action: Principal).**

2313. **HR Update**

Papers: Teachers' tariff; KPI health check; SMCG meeting notes of 5th July and 20th September

- a) **Teachers tariff: Part II minute g) Information planned in advance for publication**
- b) **Pay negotiations 2019:** The Principal reported on the lack of progress in current pay negotiations. Support staff were seeking a substantial increase in pay with a commitment to the living wage, an increase in support staff standards payment (currently £320 pa) and an additional day's leave. The Employers' Side offer included a proposed revised national pay spine, alongside an across the board increase of 1.5% for all support staff. The NJC would also seek to produce a recommended national pay policy and explore developing a bespoke NJC job evaluation scheme for the sector. The Employers' Side also agreed to review the value and relevance of the NJC support staff standards payment. UNISON agreed to consider the detail of the Employers' Side offer and a further meeting will take place in due course.

Teachers were in dispute with the Government on pay with one of three strikes planned for the autumn term already undertaken. **Collyer's staff were not on strike** as their ballot had not met the threshold of 50% of members voting. That said a second vote on further action in the New Year was possible and could produce a different result, especially if strike pay were offered.

- c) **General:** Members noted that three members of staff were on adoption or maternity leave with two more to follow early in the New Year. No one was currently absent on long-term health issues. Two former performance management issues had been resolved.
- d) **KPIs:** Members noted that the **College had recruited 2032 ESFA funded students (100 higher than in 2018)** and an additional 67 international students, approaching 2100 overall. The final **number for lagged funding would be known in January**.
- e) **The SMCG minutes** were noted.

[18.12 Mr Yorke left the meeting.]

2314. **Policies**

Papers: Data Protection Policy including CCTV and BWC Policy, Privacy Notice, Use of Computers Agreement; Archiving and Retention of College Record Policy; Health and Safety and Fire Policies 2019; Staff and Student Consultation Procedures

Members noted that the **Data Protection was new** (being far more detailed than the previous DP policy) and **reflected recommendations from the recent, and largely positive, GDPR audit as did the wholly new Archiving Policy**. This had involved all staff in reviewing their record-keeping with the range of data and its various uses inevitably causing some apprehension in terms of implementation of the policy, particularly in respect of electronic data, where software tools could however be of help. This made it particularly important for staff in each area to manage their particular circumstances effectively with appropriate IT support. Members were content with the relatively minor changes to the existing policies e.g. reflecting staff changes.

Resolved: The F&GP Committee approved the new Data Protection Policy (including CCTV and BWC Policy, Privacy Notice, Use of Computers Agreement) and Archiving and Retention of College Record Policy.

Recommendation: that the Governing Body approve the changes to the Health and Safety and Fire Safety Policies and Staff and Student Consultation procedures.

2315. **Complaints/ Appeals Report 18-19**

Paper: Complaints/ Appeals Report

The Principal explained that a number of complaints were made to the college each year, largely dealt with by Faculty Heads and Heads of House but sometimes escalated to members of SMT. The complaints listed in the report were those which were escalated to the Principal and/or Chair of Governors in the period September 2018 - September 2019. These related to an allergic sensitivity, inadequate study support, smoking outside college, an appeal against exclusion, admissions, students with study support or health support requirements and complaints about student behaviour outside college.

2316. **Community/Sector Update**

Papers: Community Engagement Statement 2019

The Principal explained that she had **updated the Community Engagement Statement**, most notably **to reflect the recent close working with the new Bohunt School**. As such, members proposed that, whilst Collyer's would not be taking the current Yr 7 intake for five years, Bohunt might also be recognised as being a partner school (**Action: DP**)

Members asked about the latest position with regard to **support from CAMHS**. The VP (Support) confirmed that support for Tier 3 students was only forthcoming in very extreme circumstances. As such the **College provision** was particularly important and **greatly supported the retention of a large number of students**. Members thanked the VP and her team for the excellent work they did.

Members noted that, **in spite of recent funding promises, the Raise the Rate funding campaign continued with calls also for a dedicated capital expansion fund.**

2317. **Any Other Business** None

2318. **Meeting assessment**

The Chair thanked SMT once again for their thorough contributions to the meeting and another late evening following the recent Open Evenings. She also welcomed the attendance of the DoAM in being able to speak directly of his progress on marketing and demonstrate the new website. Members were content with the information received, whilst feeling less familiar with the technical complexities of the staff tariff.

2319. **Date of next meeting(s): Monday 18th March 2019 at 16.15.**

The meeting ended at 18.30.

Chair

Date