

West Lothian College

12 December 2017

Board of Governors

Minute of Meeting of the Board of Governors held on 19 September 2017 at 4.30pm in the Barbour Suite.

Present: Alex Linkston (Chair)
Simon Ashpool
Tom Bates
Angela Bell
Sue Cook
Mhairi Harrington
Graham Hope
Sarah Kerr
Morag McKelvie
Colin Miller
Alan Morton
Moirra Niven
Lorna Reid

In attendance: Joanna Paterson (Secretary to the Board)
Jo Mayes (Shadow Board Member)
Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services)
George Hotchkiss (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning)
Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise)

17.34 Welcome / Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting with a particular welcome to new Board member Tom Bates and Student Association President and Vice President Sarah Kerr and Lorna Reid who were attending their first meeting as full Board members.

The Chair advised that Claire Probert had also been appointed to the Board but was unable to attend this meeting due to a prior commitment.

Apologies had also been received from Frank Gribben, Richard Lockhart, Iain McIntosh and Norman Ross.

17.35 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17.36 Minute of Meeting of 20 June 2017

The Minute of the meeting of 20 June 2017 was approved as a correct record.

17.37 Matters Arising from Minute of Meeting of 20 June 2017

There were no matters arising not otherwise on the agenda.

17.38 Learner Attainment

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning presented an overview of analysis of 2015-16 student attainment information. Data for 2016-17 was not yet available.

The analysis had identified some underlying patterns and themes and some factors that correlated with higher levels of partial success or withdrawal, including the age and gender of students and the level of programme that was being undertaken.

The improvement action plan that was being taken forward included a new programme of classroom observations linked to both continuing professional development and the sharing of best practice across the College. Course reviews would also be carried out where there were unexpected variations in performance, including a review of the appropriateness of materials and methods for the learner profiles of the course.

During discussion it was noted that conversations were taking place with the organisers of the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TFQE) about adapting the curriculum for the younger profile of current college students, including more input on classroom management.

There was some discussion of options for tracking and monitoring of an individual's progress and the benefits of learning from the models that were run in the school service.

It was also noted that there was a need to consider the best options for staging assessments to avoid back loading at the end of the academic year and allow for more effective tracking and early intervention.

It was agreed that a Board sub-group should be set up to oversee work in this area and to learn from best practice in schools, other colleges, and the national improvement programme being taken forward by the Scottish Government.

Membership of the group would include Alex Linkston, Sue Cook, Graham Hope, Sarah Kerr, Moira Niven and Norman Ross. The invitation would also be extended to those members not present at the meeting.

Action 1: Board Secretary

17.39 Chief Executive's Report

The Principal gave an update on activities from July to September 2017, highlighting many areas of activity and partnership working. It was noted that enrolments were looking healthy and that induction sessions had taken place in the second half of August.

The Board noted that there had been much estates activity over the summer including the car park extension, reflooring of the engineering curriculum workshop facility and investment in the café serving areas. Funding made available through the CEEP project had also allowed for LED replacement lighting to be installed and double glazing to be fitted in a number of areas.

The report highlighted stakeholder activity including an update on the Government Review of Enterprise and Skills and the Edinburgh and South East City Region Deal.

It was noted that an allocation of £323k had been received from the Flexible Workforce fund for workforce development with apprentice levy paying employers. This was a complex process but the team were confident the full allocation would be spent within the timeframe.

The Board noted some recent success stories including the Terrace Restaurant winner of 'Best Restaurant in the South East' award at the National Food Awards, and staff and students from the Events programmes shortlisted for the Scottish Event Awards for the 'Pride of West Lothian Awards' event run in March. This was the first time a college had been shortlisted for these awards.

The graduation would be taking place on 28 October and it was hoped that a number of Board members would be able to attend.

The Board thanked the Principal for a comprehensive and positive report.

17.40 Regional Chair's Feedback

The Chair reported back from meetings and discussions of the regional chairs. He advised that he had put his name forward and been elected as Chair of the Employers' Association.

This had required an adjustment in College membership of the Association (now Alex Linkston and Mhairi Harrington) with Sue Cook also in attendance to ensure the College's interests were fully represented.

Although negotiations had not been taking place over the summer a number of meetings had taken place reviewing activity, looking at lessons learned and planning ahead.

He advised the Board that following the appointment of the two new Board members Claire Probert had joined the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Tom Bates had joined the Learning and Teaching Committee, and Colin Miller was moving to the Audit Committee.

17.41 Student President Report

The Student Association President provided the Board with an update on initiatives and activities that had been taken forward over the summer. It was noted that the full team was now in place with the recent election of two Vice Presidents, following the departure of their predecessors to take up employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

Class representative recruitment was going well with competition in some areas for the elected position. There had been some issues with time allocation in the induction process but these had now been resolved and would be built into the planning process for next year. The new SPARKLE process included a training element and clear role descriptions for class representatives and it was hoped this would make the role more rewarding.

The team had taken part in the Scottish Government Student Funding Review consultation although it had been difficult to get direct feedback from students given the timing of the consultation. It was noted that financial concerns were a major issue for many students including the complex relationship between student funding and the benefits system.

It was noted that there had been some issues with student parking at the start of term and that more could perhaps be done to manage expectations about the level of parking that was available.

The Freshers Fair had taken place the previous week and been extremely successful. Over 1,500 students had taken part over the two days with very positive feedback from students and stall-holders. It was noted that there was increased engagement in other initiatives such as the Voice of Young Europe as a result of the opportunity to connect and engage at the Fair.

The Board noted the wide range of activity both taking place and planned and thanked the team for the report.

17.42 Board Development

The Board Secretary introduced the regular update on Board Development matters. It was noted that the programme of dates for national induction and other training had recently been circulated. Local dates for lunchtime sessions with the Students Association would also be circulated soon.

The Board agreed to note the report

17.43 Finance and General Purposes Committee

(i) Update from Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee from the draft minute of 17 August 2017

The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee reported from the meeting of 17 August 2017. The meeting had begun with a visit to the 'Endurance' fitness suite and members had appreciated the opportunity to see College facilities at first hand and the benefits that flowed from the investment programme.

The Committee had received a background briefing on finance issues as part of the Committee development plan. This had been a very useful refresher session and had also created the opportunity for some discussion of issues within the funding distribution model and ways in which these might disadvantage the College.

The main item for consideration had been the FFR which was brought separately for approval. The Committee had also reviewed the management accounts, noting the additional spend that had been released given the surplus that was forecast as a result of successful commercial activity.

The Committee had also noted that a response to the Prior Information Notice and Request for Supplier Information (RFI) had been submitted as part of the re-tendering process for the Children's Hearing Scotland Unit contract.

The Chair expressed his thanks for the report.

(ii) Financial Forecast Return (FFR)

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, introduced the draft Financial Forecast Return (FFR). It was noted that the forecast now covered a six rather than a three year period.

The Board noted that guidance issued by the SFC assumed that additional grant for National Bargaining harmonisation costs would be phased out in 2020-21 and 2021-22, leading to forecast deficits of £471k and £800k respectively, and that the Committee in discussing the FFR had recommended this be clearly presented within the forecast and commentary, rather than attempting to artificially balance the budget with unrealistic reductions in operating expenditure.

Members noted that other colleges would be highlighting similar issues and challenges in submitting their forecasts. The information presented would form part of national discussions about future budgets and funding of harmonisation costs in particular.

The assumptions about future income generation were noted including in relation to the Children's Hearings Scotland Training Unit.

It was noted that an adjustment had been required to the formula for the cash balance projections and that this figure would be updated for the final version to be submitted to the SFC.

The Board agreed to approve the FFR.

(iii) Minutes of Meeting of 17 June 2017

The Board noted the minutes of the meeting.

17.44 Learning and Teaching Committee

(i) Update from Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee from the draft minute of 6 September 2017

The Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee gave a report from the meeting of 6 September 2017.

In her report she highlighted discussion around the latest quality report, in particular the new system of classroom observations (and associated learning and development) that was being introduced this academic year.

The Committee had also discussed the SQA external exam results and the fairly significant variations in outcome contained within them.

The Committee had considered and agreed the Gender Action Plan, and was recommending the Access and Inclusion Strategy to the Board for approval.

The Chair expressed his thanks for the update.

(ii) Access and Inclusion Strategy

The Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee introduced the Access and Inclusion Strategy. The Board agreed to approve the strategy.

17.45 Audit Committee

(i) Update from Chair of the Audit Committee from the draft minute of 7 September 2017

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported on the meeting of September 2017. The Committee had considered the Annual Internal Audit Report, and noted the reasonable assurance given. Members had also discussed the Internal Audit plan, as well as the Financial Regulations, Health and Safety report and Strategic Risk Register that were separate agenda items.

The Chair thanked the Chair of the Committee for the update.

(ii) Financial Regulations and Schedule of Financial Approvals

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, introduced the draft Financial Regulations and Schedule of Financial Approvals which had been considered by both the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Audit Committee.

The Board agreed to approve the revised Financial Regulations and Schedule of Financial Approvals.

(iii) Strategic Risk Register

The Chair of the Audit Committee reminded Board members that it had been agreed it would be useful for Board members to see the Strategic Risk Register once a year, for information.

The Board agreed to note the report.

(iv) Health and Safety Quarterly Report

The Board agreed to note the report.

17.46 Update from Chair of the Remuneration Committee from the minute of 23 August 2017

Morag McKelvie reported from the minute of the meeting of 23 August 2017.

The main item of business had been consideration of management pay issues that were outwith the scope of the national bargaining framework.

The Board agreed to note the minutes.

17.47 Any Other Business

The Chair reported that this was the last meeting that would be supported by the Board secretary, Joanna Paterson, who was relocating to the Isle of Lewis. The Chair thanked Joanna on behalf of the Board for her contribution over the last couple of years and wished her well for the future.

There were no other items of business.

17.48 Review of Meeting, Supporting Paper and Development Plan

The Board was content with the meeting and supporting papers presented. No changes were required to the Development Plan.

17.49 Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 12 December at 4.30pm.

Note: There were no matters discussed during the meeting, during which Members declared any conflict of interest, or the Secretary to the Board was aware from the Register of Interests that discussion could give rise to such a conflict.

Signed
Chair, Board of Governors

Date