

West Lothian College

20 June 2017

Board of Governors

Minute of Meeting of the Board of Governors held on 14 March 2017 at 4.00pm in the Barbour Suite.

Present: Alex Linkston (Chair)
Michael Allan
Simon Ashpool
Angela Bell
Sue Cook
Frank Gribben
Mhairi Harrington
Graham Hope
Richard Lockhart
Iain McIntosh
Morag McKelvie
Colin Miller
Alan Morton
Moiria Niven
Norman Ross
Jarmila Slodyczka

In attendance: Jo Mayes (Shadow Board Member)
Joanna Paterson (Secretary to the Board)
Jennifer McLaren (Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance)
George Hotchkiss (Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Planning)
Jenny Stalker (Head of Quality and Learner Services)
Colin Miller (Head of Essential Skills and Progression)
David Eardley (Scott-Moncrieff, Item 17.02)

17.01 Welcome / Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting with a particular welcome to Jo Mayes who had recently joined the Board as a shadow member. David Eardley from Scott-Moncrieff was also welcomed to the meeting.

It was noted that Cynthia Guthrie and Frank McGraw had stepped down since the last meeting of the Board. The Board expressed its appreciation for the contributions they had made during their period of office.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17.02 Board Effectiveness Review

David Eardley from Scott-Moncrieff presented the process and findings from the externally facilitated Board effectiveness review. The review had included a self-assessment, a desk-based evaluation, observation of a Board meeting, an online survey, and a range of one to one meetings. There had been a high level of engagement in each element of the process.

Suggestions for some procedural improvements had been picked up and would be taken forward. There were also suggestions around ways to increase visibility and opportunities for engagement with students and staff. Similar points had emerged through the recent Committee self-evaluations and would be taken forward within the Board Development Plan.

Some sector-wide issues and challenges had been raised during the review, including the risks of making Board membership less attractive and accessible, and these would be reflected in the final report.

It was noted that the draft report from the review would be submitted by the end of March. This would be made available to the SFC on a draft basis. The report would be considered at the June meeting of the Board along with a proposed response.

17.03 Minute of Meeting of 13 December 2016

The Minute of the meeting of 13 December 2016 was approved as a correct record.

17.04 Matters Arising from Minute of Meeting of 13 December 2016

Members noted the paper detailing actions duly completed following the meeting of 13 December 2016.

The Board Secretary advised that two decisions had been taken in correspondence since the last meeting and needed to be confirmed.

The Board agreed that a banking relationship will be maintained with The Royal Bank of Scotland plc (RBS) in accordance with the RBS mandate and that the individuals identified as authorised signatories may, in accordance with the signing rules, sign cheques and give instructions for Standing Orders, Direct Debits, electronic payments, banker's drafts and other payments on the accounts even if it causes an account to be overdrawn or exceed any limit;

The Board agreed that the Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance and Finance Manger will administer the BACS service on behalf of the College.

There were no other matters arising.

17.05 Chief Executive's Report

The Principal gave an update on activities from January to March 2017, highlighting many areas of activity and partnership working, with a particular focus on the extensive consultation which had taken place around the 2017-2020 Regional Plan and the short term priorities and actions for 2017-18 which flowed from the plan.

In relation to learner attainment and the KPIs, it was noted that an in-depth analysis would be undertaken over the next couple of months to make full use of existing quantitative and qualitative data to shape recommendations for retention and attainment strategies. This analysis would be presented to the next meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee as a 'deep dive' agenda item.

Board members commented that there may be resources within some of the College's partner organisations who could assist with analysis of existing data to help identify underlying patterns.

Many areas of learner activity and success were highlighted including the recent Pride of West Lothian Awards night run by Events students, excellent feedback from the 'Project Search' annual audit, and Hospitality students and staff running the Houston House Hotel Restaurant and Kitchens on 10 March for a charity event. It was noted that a very successful open day had taken place on the 11 March with over 400 people coming into the campus to see the facilities on offer.

Board members noted the high volume of international activity that was continuing to take place and the value and benefits that these various visits and exchanges were bringing.

The work of the City Deal group was noted, including analysis of skills areas where critical future shortages were predicted, currently focused on the construction industry, and 'digital and data driven innovation'.

Members commented on how much they appreciated being able to see range and breadth of activity across the College and asked that their appreciation be passed on to staff. They thanked the Principal for the comprehensive report.

17.06 Regional Chair's Feedback

The Chair reported back from meetings and discussions of the regional chairs. The main focus continued to be around pay negotiations and he provided an update both on current negotiations, including the risk of industrial action, and some of the longer term issues that the Employers Association were taking forward in relation to modernisation and the harmonisation of pay and conditions.

17.07 Student President Report

The Student Association President provided the Board with an update on a wide range of initiatives and activities that had been taken forward in the last quarter.

It was noted that the focus for the Association this year had been on mental health, wellbeing and equality and a number of initiatives and programmes that had been taken forward in these areas were highlighted.

The Board noted that the new Student Association website would be launched in March helping to signpost students to internal and external sources of advice and information on clubs, activities and events.

The Board thanked Jarmila and Michael for a very positive report.

17.08 Board Development

The Board Secretary presented an update on Board development work.

Members noted that the three Committees had recently completed the annual self-evaluation exercise and that the report on this would come to the June Board meeting.

A number of suggestions for development activity had emerged from these self-evaluations including time for in-depth discussion, briefing sessions for members, visiting the campus as part of a Committee meeting at least once a year, and encouragement to all members to attend meetings of other Committees. These suggestions would be brought together with recommendations from the Board Effectiveness Review into the Board Development Plan.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee had agreed it would be useful to remind Board members of the arrangements for reporting on HR issues. The arrangements as set out in the paper were noted.

Members' participation in various induction, training and networking events was noted.

It was noted that the Strategic Planning Day for Board members was scheduled for Wednesday 24 May.

It was agreed that it would be useful to start scheduling time slots for the annual Board appraisal meetings.

Action 1: Board Secretary

The Board agreed to note the report.

17.09 Update from Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee from the draft minute of 23 February 2017.

Frank Gribben on behalf of the Committee Chair gave a report from the meeting of 23 February 2017.

In giving the report he highlighted some of the discussions around the HR report including feedback on the new Occupational Health service and approaches to tackling sickness absence. Committee discussions were supported by good quality information from the HR team.

The Committee had received an updated on the capital programme, noting that the planning permission had been received for the car park work which would be taken forward through the maintenance budget.

In relation to the College Energy Efficiency Pathfinder (CEEP) project, it was noted that an investment grade proposal was to be undertaken prior to formal Committee approval being sought. It was expected that works would take place between May and July.

The Committee had also received a positive update on income generation.

The Chair expressed his thanks for the report.

17.10 Learning and Teaching Committee

(i) Update from Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee from the draft minute of 1 March 2017

The Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee reported from the meeting of 1 March 2017. The meeting had begun with a visit to the new childcare playroom learning facility which had been interesting and enjoyable.

In her report she highlighted the update on applications for 2017-18 including on-going issues around recruitment to Foundation Apprenticeship courses, and sector-wide discussions that were taking place in relation to this.

Board members discussed the continued importance of schools and teachers making parents and pupils aware of the opportunities available at the College. It was recognised that there would inevitably be variations in how this was delivered at individual classroom level and that efforts to raise awareness directly with parents (through marketing, open days and so on) would also continue.

The Committee had discussed the findings of the Student On Course Evaluation (SOCE) report, noting improvements in satisfaction in a number of areas and actions that were being taken forward in response in relation to comments and issues raised.

The revised constitution of the Student Association had also been approved.

As highlighted within the Chief Executive's report, the Committee had agreed to have a structured discussion around attainment and KPIs at its next meeting.

The Chair expressed his thanks for the update.

(ii) Equalities Mainstreaming Report

The Committee had considered the Equalities Mainstreaming Report and agreed to recommend it to the Board for approval.

It was noted that some further analysis had been requested to include any gaps within the relevant sector or pay band.

The Board agreed to approve the Report.

17.11 Audit Committee

(i) Update from Chair of the Audit Committee from the meeting of 9 March 2017

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported on the meeting of 9 March 2017.

The main focus of the meeting had been the findings from the Internal Audit review of financial systems, covering controls surrounding both purchasing and creditors, and payroll and expenses and the proposed management response including actions already taken.

The Committee had discussed the strategic risk register including the need to consider risks and mitigating actions in relation to pay bargaining and the possibility of industrial action. There had been some discussion of the options for ensuring the Board maintained its overview of the strategic risk register, and this would be discussed further with the Chair of the Board.

The Committee had undertaken the annual self-evaluation, noting that it would be helpful if the current vacancy could be filled following the next round of recruitment of new members, to keep the size of Committee membership at five.

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

(ii) Health and Safety Quarterly Report and Annual Report

The Health and Safety Quarterly Report and Annual Report for 2016 had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting. The Board agreed to note these reports.

17.12 Nominations Committee

(i) Update from Chair of the Nominations Committee from the minute of 20 February 2017

The Chair reported from the meeting of 20 February 2017 including the planned approach to recruitment of new members following the two recent resignations.

There had been an update on arrangements to support the shadowing programme and it was good to see that Jo Mayes had now joined the Learning and Teaching Committee and Board as a shadow member.

The Committee had noted the new guidance on succession planning from the Scottish Government and agreed to consider this again in detail at its next meeting, in the context of action the Board was already taking.

It was noted that the Committee had discussed and agreed a response to the consultation on the Draft Gender Representation on Public Bodies (Scotland) Bill.

The Board noted the report.

(ii) Protocol for the Co-option of Committee members

The Committee had considered a protocol for the co-option of Committee members which was now put forward for approval. Arrangements had also been agreed for shadow Board members and these had also been included for information.

The Board approved the protocol for the co-option of Committee members for inclusion in the governance framework.

17.13 Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

17.14 Review of Meeting, Supporting Paper and Training Needs

The Board was content with the meeting and supporting papers presented.

17.15 Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 20 June 2017 at 4.30pm.

Board members noted that the strategic planning day would take place on Wednesday 24 May.

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