

West Lothian College

19 September 2017

Board of Governors

Minute of Meeting of the Board of Governors held on 20 June 2017 at 4.30pm in the Barbour Suite.

Present: Alex Linkston (Chair)
Simon Ashpool
Sue Cook (to item 17.24)
Frank Gribben
Mhairi Harrington
Graham Hope
Richard Lockhart
Iain McIntosh (from item 17.24)
Morag McKelvie
Colin Miller
Alan Morton (from item 17.23)
Moirra Niven
Norman Ross
Jarmila Slodyczka

In attendance: Joanna Paterson (Secretary to the Board)
Sarah Kerr (Student Association)
Lorna Reid (Student Association)
Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services)
George Hotchkiss (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning)
Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise)

17.16 Welcome / Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting with a particular welcome to the incoming members from the Student Association, Sarah Kerr (President) and Lorna Reid (Vice President). Simon Earp was also welcomed to his first Board meeting.

Apologies had been received from Michael Allan, Angela Bell, and Jo Mayes (shadow Board member).

There had been an opportunity for Board members to visit the photography exhibition before the start of the meeting and see the work of the students on display as well as the facilities available to them.

Members expressed their thanks for the opportunity to see another aspect of the work of the College.

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17.17 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17.18 Minute of Meeting of 14 March 2017

The Minute of the meeting of 14 March 2017 was approved as a correct record.

17.19 Matters Arising from Minute of Meeting of 14 March 2017

Members noted the paper detailing actions duly completed following the meeting of 14 March 2017.

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

The Board considered and approved a response to the Scottish Government consultation on good governance which was subsequently submitted on behalf of the Board.

There were no other matters arising.

17.20 Chief Executive's Report

The Principal gave an update on activities from April to June 2017, highlighting many areas of activity and partnership working. The annual 'strategic dialogue' event with SFC had been very positive with strong feedback about the enthusiasm and positivity of staff and students that the Council members had met on the day.

Many areas of learner activity and success were highlighted in the report including the photography exhibition, an international E-Preneurs week, and an exhibition of the work of art students. Students on the art course had again received a high number of offers of places from art colleges and the growing reputation of the course was also reflected in the number and quality of applications.

Board members noted that the College had been shortlisted for two awards at The Herald Higher Education Awards for Scotland, with the ceremony to take place on 6 July.

The Board thanked Principal for another comprehensive and positive report.

17.21 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 on recent negotiations in relation to both lecturing and support staff. There was some discussion about the importance of the Employers Association developing a more strategic approach to the next stage of negotiations, including the approach to communications and resourcing of the negotiating teams.

Board member recruitment had been taking place with a final round of interviews scheduled for later in the week. It was hoped that recommendations would then be circulated to the Board for any comment and put to the Scottish Government for approval.

The annual review meetings with individual Board members had now almost all taken place. Individual action points would be taken forward with Board members and more general suggestions were reflected in the Board Development Plan. The Chair thanked members of the Board for their participation in this process which had been very useful.

The Chair had also taken part in the annual appraisal meeting with the Scottish Government. One of the longer term issues he had flagged up at this meeting was the development of a business case for an extension to the College, given the continued growth in population in West Lothian. A desktop exercise would be undertaken to start exploring the options.

17.22 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 and an overview of the year.

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 Association had recently been awarded a 4 Star rating for its work in this area.

The team had developed many initiatives during the course of the year which would continue and develop under the new team as recently elected. The Student President expressed her thanks to the Student Association Development Officer who had supported the team throughout the year.

The Board noted that a question had been raised about the most appropriate model for payment of Student Association Vice Presidents and the potential implications of this for the length of time an individual could remain in paid office, and that this would be explored further by the Association.

The Board thanked Jarmila for a very positive report. The Chair on behalf of the Board expressed thanks for the contributions Jarmila had made to both the Association and as a Board member for the past two years.

17.23 Board Development

(i) Effectiveness Review Report

The Board Secretary introduced the background, timing and context of the final report from the externally facilitated Effectiveness Review.

It was noted that following this meeting the report would be sent in final form to the SFC along with the approved Board Development Plan and an update on delivery of the previous year's Plan. The report and plan would also be published on the College website.

The Board agreed to note the final report.

(ii) Self-Evaluation of Committees

The Board Secretary introduced the report from the annual self-evaluation by Committees of their own practice and performance. The Board noted that action points and recommendations had been incorporated either into the relevant Committee or Board Development Plan.

The Board agreed to note the report.

(iii) Strategic Planning Day: Report from Meeting

The Board Secretary introduced the report from the Strategic Planning Day which had taken place on 24 May 2017.

It was noted that action points and suggestions from the day were now reflected in the Board Development Plan.

The Board agreed to note the report.

(iv) Board Development Plan

The Board Secretary introduced the draft Board Development Plan for consideration. The Plan had been prepared based on decisions and recommendations from various sources including Board and Committee meetings, the recent Committee self-evaluation process, Board Away Day, points raised in review meetings, the recent internal audit of corporate governance and externally evaluated effectiveness review.

Two points within the plan were for consideration at the meeting. The Board noted the previous consideration and recommendations from the Nominations Committee in relation to these two points.

The Board considered the recommendation to establish a 'Chairs Forum' and agreed not to take forward the suggestion at this stage but to retain it as an option for consideration in the future should circumstances (including membership of the Nominations Committee) change.

The Board considered the recommendation that Annual Reports be introduced from each Committee and agreed that these were not required from either Learning and Teaching or Finance and General Purposes given the effective mechanisms for reporting that were already in place. The Audit Annual Report would continue as a requirement of the SFC.

The Board agreed to approve the Plan.

(v) Report from Board Secretary

The Board Secretary introduced the regular update on Board Development matters other than those already considered on the agenda.

It was noted that a briefing on Board members' role in equality and diversity had recently been circulated and was available in the Moodle library for reference.

As part of the report the Board Secretary provided a short briefing for members on their responsibilities to declare interests.

The Board agreed to note the report.

17.24 Finance and General Purposes Committee

(i) Update from Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee from the Meeting of 15 June 2017

The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee reported from the meeting of 15 June 2017.

In giving the report she highlighted a very positive HR report which had covered updates on work in relation to sickness absence, feedback on the new occupational health service, and a survey of the new HR service which had elicited positive feedback.

The key findings from the staff survey had been reported to the Committee including a high (77%) response rate, the generally high positive feedback in most areas and a few points of concern that would now be explored further.

The Committee had received an update on the work to the visitors car park and agreed to approve additional costs for work that was required for maintenance and drainage purposes as well as the visual impact at the main entrance to the College. The Committee had noted that more general issues around car parking would be explored again during the summer break.

The Committee had also received a very positive update on income generation. The management accounts were looking positive, in large part due to the work on income generation.

The Chair expressed his thanks for the report.

(ii) Annual Budget 2017-18 for approval

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, introduced the draft Annual Budget for 2017-18. The budget and cover paper as considered and recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee had been circulated in advance and paper copies were distributed at the meeting.

The Board noted the key underpinning assumptions and requirements as laid out in the report. This included an assumption that an additional £135k would be provided to meet the in-year costs of the harmonisation of lecturers pay across the sector.

An update was provided on a meeting which had taken place on 19 June with the SFC.

The SFC had advised that additional funding had already been provided for cost pressures and that the harmonisation costs were expected to be met from within these funds. They had however acknowledged specific anomalies facing West Lothian College and had indicated that an additional £80k would be made available for harmonisation costs.

Discussions would continue with the SFC about the detail of the figures to ensure that the College was not unfairly carrying a shortfall on the basis of the distribution model used by the SFC.

Pending the outcome of these further discussions the Board agreed that if there was a remaining shortfall of £55k it could be met by reducing the investment programme by an equivalent amount.

Subject to this one amendment, the Board agreed to approve the budget for 2017-18.

17.25 Update from Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee from the draft minute of 7 June 2017

Iain McIntosh gave a report on behalf of the Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee from the meeting of 7 June 2017.

In his report he highlighted the structure of the meeting which had allowed for a 'deep dive' exploration of factors affecting the key learning KPIs, including a very useful presentation of the analysis undertaken, and over an hour of discussion. The minutes included a note of the various questions, points and considerations that emerged in discussion.

The Board noted that the Committee would consider further analysis and next steps at its next meeting. The intention was that key points from the analysis would then be shared with the Board at its September meeting.

The Committee had also discussed more standard items on the agenda including an update on applications, and the KPIs. Members had noted the complex position in relation to targets, outcomes and sanctions.

Board members noted that one of the longer-term issues to emerge from the analysis around attainment was the need to consider core assumptions underpinning the current training mechanism (TFQE) which was broadly predicated on a student population of adult returners rather than younger and potentially more disengaged learners.

The Chair expressed his thanks for the update.

17.26 Audit Committee

(i) Update from Chair of the Audit Committee from the meeting of 6 June 2017

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported on the meeting of 6 June 2017.

The main focus of the meeting had been the findings from the Internal Audit reviews of corporate governance, portfolio planning, and budget setting and monitoring. The reports from these reviews had been positive with only a small number of improvements recommended and offering a good degree of assurance.

The Committee had discussed the strategic risk register and mitigating actions taken. The main risks identified had also been the subject of discussion at this Board meeting.

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

(ii) Health and Safety Quarterly Report

The Board agreed to note the report.

(iii) Health and Safety Policy

The Board agreed to approve the policy.

(iv) Minutes of Meeting of 9 March 2017

The Board agreed to note the minutes from the meeting of 9 March.

17.27 Nominations Committee

(i) Update from Chair of the Nominations Committee from the minute of 25 May 2017

The Chair reported from the meeting of 25 May 2017 including a number of items that had been reported and discussed elsewhere on the agenda.

The Board agreed to note the minutes.

(ii) Items for Inclusion in the Governance Framework

The Committee had considered two items for inclusion in the governance framework: arrangements for maintaining the Register of Interests, and a statement of Principal and Chief Executive roles and responsibilities in relation to the Board.

The Board agreed to approve these two items.

The Board expressed their appreciation for the background work that had gone into the preparation of these and other governance items reported at this meeting.

17.28 Update from Chair of the Remuneration Committee from the minute of 25 May 2017

The Board Secretary reported from the meeting of 25 May 2017.

The main item of business had been to consider an update to the remit of the Committee. The Principal had also provided an update on the financial consequences of national bargaining.

The Board agreed to note the minutes.

17.29 Annual Review of Committee Remits

The Board Secretary introduced the paper with recommendations from Committees following the annual review of remits. The timetable and arrangements for an annual review cycle were also noted.

The Board agreed to approve the revised Committee remits.

17.30 Board and Committee Dates for 2018

The Board agreed to note the dates for the next calendar year.

17.31 Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

17.32 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.

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17.33 Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 19 September 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