

PROSPECTS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

6 MAY 2015

MINUTES

Present:	David Sherlock (Chair)	External Governor
	Neil Bates	Chief Executive/Principal
	Carole Leach	External Member
	Bala Mahendran	External Governor
	Peter McKee	External Governor
	Kini Pathmanathan	External Governor
	Rachel Richards	External Governor
	Theo Steel	External Governor
	Ruth Umerah	External Governor
	David Wells	External Governor
	Tom Wilson	External Governor

In attendance:	Robin Jones	Clerk to the Board of Governors
	Helen Russell	Director of Business Development
	Neil Warren	Chief Operating Officer

92 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Chair welcomed David Wells to his first meeting of the Board following his appointment to serve as an External Member.

The Board noted that Jackie Northedge had resigned from the staff of the College and, therefore, from membership of the Board. Members agreed to place on record their appreciation for the past contributions to the College and the Board and to wish her well.

93 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Board received and noted the apologies for absence from the following Member:

- Felix Bateman - Student Member
- Theo Steel - External Governor
- Ruth Umerah - External Governor

94 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Members present confirmed that there were no declarations of interest relative to the issues set out in the published agenda.

95 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2015

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 25 February 2015 were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

96 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2015

The Board agreed that, in the main, there were no items arising from the minutes of the last meeting requiring attention over and above those set out in the published agenda.

The one exception highlighted at this point of the meeting concerned health & safety – Members noted that it was the intention of the College to seek external accreditation or certification for health & safety in recognition of the importance of having safe working practices for the benefit of learners, staff and visitors to the College.

97 AUDIT COMMITTEE – 20 APRIL 2015

The Board received and noted the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2015.

It was noted that the main items of business concerned the appointment of External Auditors and assurance mapping.

98 EXTERNAL AUDITORS

The Board considered and approved the recommendation of the Audit Committee that MHA MacIntyre Hudson be appointed as the External Auditors to undertake the annual review of the Financial Statements with immediate effect.

The initial appointment would be for a period of three years subject to annual review.

Finally, the Board noted the commitment of MHA MacIntyre Hudson to maintain the fee proposal for the period of three years as set out in the tender proposal and reviewed by the Audit Committee.

99 GOVERNANCE & SEARCH COMMITTEE – 25 FEBRUARY 2015 AND 6 MAY 2015

The Board received and noted the minutes of the meeting of the Governance & Search Committee held on 25 February 2015.

The Board also noted that a meeting of the Committee had taken place immediately before the meeting of the Board and the main items concerned:

- Code of Good Governance for English Colleges – see item 100 below
- Membership of the Board – item 92 above

The Minutes of the meeting will be presented to the Corporation on 21 July 2015.

100 CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR ENGLISH COLLEGES

The Board noted that, immediately prior to this meeting, the Governance & Search Committee had reviewed the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges recently published by the AoC.

The Chair explained that the proposed way forward for PROCAT included the following:

- To welcome the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges as the basis of a statement that could be adopted by the Board subject to some amendments (such as to Principal 5 on working with employers and Principal 8 which currently was limited to equality and diversity)
- To invite all Members of the Board to contribute to the discussion on the contents of the Code and to provide an opportunity to forward further comments to the Clerk by 21 May 2015 so as to inform the redrafting of the final version of the document

- That the Code would be personalised to the specific aims and ambitions of PROCAT for further consideration by the Governance & Search Committee and then the Board on, if practicable, 21 July 2015 when consideration would be given to formal adoption
- That the Clerk would prepare for consideration at the meeting scheduled for 21 July 2015 a matrix of the policies and procedures that should be in place to meet the statutory and regulatory frameworks with an indication of what has now been adopted so as to ensure that the Board and the College have taken all appropriate actions and that these are then kept under review

Members also noted that, when addressing such national frameworks and recommendations, it was appropriate to tailor these, as far as practicable, to the specific role and needs of PROCAT and, therefore, the “comply or explain” approach had particular merit.

Finally it was explained that it was anticipated that the forthcoming review of the matrix of policies and procedures would then inform, at least in part, future reviews of the risks facing the College

The Board agreed to support the proposed approach of the Governance & Search Committee to addressing the Code of Good Governance and related matters.

101 DUAL MANDATE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The Board received a presentation by the Principal on the consultation launched by the Secretary of State for Business Innovation & Skills in March 2015 on a Dual Mandate for vocational education.

Interestingly the consultation document included a case study on PROCAT.

Members noted that responses to the issues raised in the consultation document are invited by BIS by 16 June 2015.

The presentation prompted a wide ranging discussion on the future arrangements for skills training including the role of the Government.

Members were of the view that PROCAT had an important contribution to make to the future provision of vocational skills and that the model adopted for PROCAT had the potential for wider application so as to engage with employers and others with an interest in and commitment to vocational education.

One of a number of key questions to be addressed concerned the future of Apprenticeships. It was thought that, if the approach was to have the impact that the country needs, Apprenticeships need to start at and not finish for a majority of young people and adults at level 3. This would then provide the scope to develop meaningful and valued/valuable higher education routes.

The Board agreed:

- to note the launch of the national consultation and to welcome the presentation by the Principal on the Dual Mandate
- to request the Principal to prepare the College’s response to the 44 questions asked in the national consultation having regard to the comments made during the discussion at this meeting of the Board and share this with Members in early June 2015 prior to the submission to BIS.

102 STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 - 2018

The Board noted that, since the approval of the Strategic Plan on 25 February 2015, the Principal had refined aspects of the text to reflect developments.

The Principal confirmed the intention to prepare a brief paper setting out the basis of the preparation of the Strategic Plan as an aide memorie for future reference.

Members acknowledged that a great deal had been achieved over the last eight months and far more was planned for the coming period.

The Board and College cycle of business will include an ongoing as well as well as an annual review to monitor and evaluate progress against the Strategic Plan.

Members were reminded that in addition to the circulation of printed copies the Strategic Plan can be found for reference purposes on the Governors' SharePoint site.

The Board:

- confirmed approval of the Strategic Plan
- received and noted the Strategic Plan Work Strands summary indicating the anticipated start and end dates for a number of key initiatives
- agreed to look forward to receiving further updates on the Strategic Plan and related issues at forthcoming meetings.

103 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Board received and discussed the detailed report of the Principal which provided updates on a number of issues affecting the College.

In terms of an overview of current developments the Principal highlighted the following:

- The Strategic Plan
- Curriculum development including the establishment of the Board of Studies
- Investment in new engineering equipment and digital learning
- Business development
- Financial performance of the College
- Quality of provision
- People and professional culture with a particular mention of the appointment of Helen Russell as the Director of Business Development and the retirements in December 2015 of Alistair Grocock and Sue Baxter from the posts of Director of Finance & Resources and Director of Learning respectively.

The Principal also addressed a number of issues in his comprehensive report including:

- Estates Review and Southend properties
- Digital Learning Fellowship
- SFA Capital Bid
- GTA Federation Model
- Visits and meetings since the last meeting of the Board

Particular attention was given to the review of the estate and the future plans of the College including a letter dated 26 March 2015 from Solicitors acting on behalf of the College to Southend Borough Council. Discussions were planned with the Local Authority to seek a solution to the current position with regard to the proposed disposal of Fairfax Drive as well as other issues requiring attention.

Members of the Board took the opportunity, whilst reviewing the report of the Principal, to probe a number of the themes set out in the report as well as related issues.

The exchange of views and the points covered included the ways and means of gaining feedback from learners. This will be used to inform the new College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) which will be a Board agenda item in the autumn.

The Board agreed, following a wide ranging discussion:

- to thank the Principal for the comprehensive report
- to look forward to receiving further updates at future meetings
- to authorise the Executive to progress the discussions with Southend Borough Council with regard to estates related issues
- to welcome the suggestion that a briefing be provided for Members on digital learning.

104 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Board received and considered the report of the Chief Operating Officer which addressed the following:

- Operations
- Efficiency Review – actions taken as well as those planned
- Quality
- Capital Investment

The particular attention of the Board was drawn to:

- the comprehensive summary of College performance including actual outcomes from 2012/13 and the forecasts for the current year as well as 2015/16 and 2016/17
- the intention to provide a focussed Quality Improvement Plan for 2015/16
- the planned remodelling of the Engineering Centre at a cost of about £75k which is being explored by the Executive.

The Board agreed to note the report of the Chief Operating Officer and to look forward to receiving further updates at future meetings.

105 DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT'S REPORT

The Board received and considered of the Director of Business Development which covered the following issues:

- GTA Committees
- Fee proposal for Apprenticeships
- Apprenticeships
- Commercial
- Marketing and communications
- Projects – STEM in development
- Priorities for business development

The priorities highlighted included progressing the GTA initiative, building the College reputation and increasing awareness of PROCAT, expanding commercial and business development capacity and expanding the College offer with more provision at advanced and higher level to meet employer demand.

The Board agreed following discussion:

- to note the report of the Director of Business Development
- to support the approach set out in the report for determining fees for Apprenticeships
- to look forward to receiving further updates on these and related issues at future meetings

106 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The Board received and discussed the Management Accounts for the period to 31 March 2015.

The commentary to the Management Accounts highlighted a number of issues as at Period 8 of 2014/15 including:

- performance to date against the approved estimates
- Apprenticeship income - £108k below budget although there were reasons for this which were explained
- Commercial sales income - £49k below budget although it was also appropriate to consider the associated costs of delivery and, therefore, the profit margin which was only £12k below budget
- Creative Sport and Leisure – changed approach to accruing income so as to provide an accurate picture of performance
- Exceptional items – the position arising from the fact that the disposal of Fairfax Drive did not progress in line with the anticipated timeline meant that there are unbudgeted costs from 1 March 2015 to cover

One of the areas of uncertainty related to the Government (SFA) approach to in-year growth for Apprenticeships. This was far from helpful and even though in previous years the income has been received eventually this has yet to be confirmed for 2014/15 although Members recognised that, if the Government wish to see the substantial increase in Apprenticeships materialise, there must be funding from one or more sources.

The Board agreed:

- to note the Management Accounts for March 2015 including the various adverse variances
- to recognise that, given the various uncertainties, it was not yet possible to provide a definite year end out-turn amount
- to review on a future occasion – possibly in October 2015 – the approach to Creative Sport and Leisure

107 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Board received a report on Risk Management supported by the up-to-date Risk Register.

It was noted that the Risk Policy was scheduled to be an item for review by the Audit Committee on 30 June 2015 prior to presentation to the Board on 21 July 2015 together with the Risk Register.

Members recognised that the Risk Register continues to be seen as a live document and, therefore, will be the subject of regular review. At the meeting on 25 February 2015 the Board had asked that an indication be provided of the direction of travel so that emerging changes and trends can be identified with ease.

108 SAFEGUARDING

The Board received a report on Safeguarding which addressed a number of related issues:

- Ruth Umerah, as the Corporation's lead on Safeguarding, had met the Designated Safeguarding Lead to discuss related issues
- A visit had been made to T2 to learn from their approach to safeguarding as they had been judged to be outstanding
- CPD training for staff on Safeguarding was now all but complete and will feature on an ongoing basis
- The online training facility will be made available to Members of the Board
- The College will be engaging with the national PREVENT Strategy
- Safeguarding will be a central part of the new Quality Improvement Plan and will also be reflected in the ongoing review of policies and procedures

The Board agreed to note the update on Safeguarding and to look forward to receiving further reports at future meetings.

109 HEALTH & SAFETY

The Board noted the confirmation of the intention of the College to achieve national recognition for excellence in terms of health & safety.

Once again the point was stressed and acknowledged by Members that the risk appetite for health & safety and also safeguarding is very low.

The Board agreed to look forward to receiving regular updates on health & safety at future meetings.

110 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD

The Board noted that the final scheduled meeting in 2014/15 will be on Tuesday 21 July 2015 commencing at 3.00pm at the Basildon Campus.

111 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS – 2015/16

The Board approved the calendar of meetings for 2015/16:

- Friday 16 and Saturday 17 October 2015
- Wednesday 9 December 2015
- Wednesday 10 February 2016
- Wednesday 4 May 2016
- Wednesday 20 July 2016

The meetings will commence at 3.00pm with the exception of the October meeting which will be a residential planning session and include a meeting of the Board (possibly at 4.00pm on 16 October 2015).

The location for meetings (other than October which is likely to be in Colchester) will be confirmed nearer the time.

Signed: _____ Date: _____