

PROSPECTS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

10 December 2014

MINUTES

Present:

David Sherlock (Chair))
Bala Mahendran)
Carole Leach) External governors
Peter McKee)
Ruth Umerah)
Neil Bates	Chief Executive/Principal
Jackie Northedge	Staff governor
Felix Bateman	Student governor

In attendance:

Neil Warren	Chief Operating Officer
Helen Russell	Director of Business Development (designate)
Ian James	Clerk to the Board of Governors

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

47 Apologies were received from Kini Pathmanathan, Rachel Richards, Theo Steel and Tom Wilson.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

48 Governors were advised of the requirement to declare their interest in any agenda items. Following any such declaration, governors would not be able to speak or vote on the matters under discussion.

APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT GOVERNOR

49 **Resolved** on the recommendation of the Governance & Search Committee, that Felix Bateman be appointed as the student governor until 31 July 2015

MINUTES

50 **Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 17 October 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

51 The Board received the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 14 October 2014. The Committee had been due to meet again immediately after this Board meeting but had had to be cancelled and a decision was needed as to whether the College should go out to tender for external audit services. The governors felt that it would be appropriate to do so given the College's status as an FE Corporation and it was –

52 **Resolved** that a tendering exercise be conducted for external audit services for 2014/15

REPORT FROM GOVERNANCE & SEARCH COMMITTEE

53 The Chair of the Committee reported on the outcome of a meeting held immediately prior to this Board meeting. This had included recommending the student governor for appointment (referred to in minute 49 above).

Board membership

54 Following the recent appointments of Peter McKee and Tom Wilson, the Board had three remaining vacancies for external governors. Two of these would be appointed on the recommendation of the GTA's and an individual had been approached to fill the third vacancy, details to be circulated to the Board by the Principal.

Committee memberships

55 Following the two appointments referred to above, the Committee had considered the vacancies that existed on the Board's committees.

56 **Resolved** that Peter McKee be appointed to serve on the Audit Committee and Tom Wilson on the Governance & Search Committee

Appointment of Vice-Chair

57 The Board had yet to appoint a person as Vice Chair and the Committee had discussed whether to hold a nomination and election process or to nominate an individual. The Chair reported that Bala Mahendran was willing to undertake the role.

58 **Resolved** that Bala Mahendran be appointed as Vice Chair until 31 July 2015

Safeguarding

59 It was generally acknowledged as good practice to nominate a governor to take a special interest in safeguarding and the Committee felt that Ruth Umerah would be the ideal person to fulfil this role. The Board Chair had approached her about this before the Board meeting and she was willing to undertake this role.

60 **Resolved** that Ruth Umerah be nominated as the governor with a special interest in safeguarding

Clerkship

61 The interim Clerk was due to stand down shortly and the role had been advertised on the clerks' mailbase. A candidate had come forward for this role who was known to the Clerk and who was available from 1 January. Arrangements were being made to interview this candidate.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

62 The Principal submitted a detailed report updating the governors on various current issues affecting the College. In particular, the governors noted the following:

- commencement of the implementation of stage 2 of the new College branding under the Marketing Strategy
- an update on the sale of the College's site at Fairfax Drive, Southend

- the draft outcome of a recent inspection of the College's railway engineering provision by the National Skills Academy for Railway Engineering
- the outcome of a recent monitoring visit to Futures Community College recording 'reasonable progress'
- an update on the strengthening and re-organisation of the Senior Leadership Team
- progress on the application for £1.6m for capital equipment
- the securing of a £50k grant from the Edge Foundation for a school ambassador to promote apprenticeships with a particular focus on STEM subjects such as rail and aviation
- an adjustment to the grant from the ETF for a post specialising in digital learning technologies, now likely to be around £200k
- an update on the College's international links, noting the need for the Board to settle its strategy in this area at some stage
- the production of a STEM development strategy through the New Engineering Foundation

STRATEGIC PLANNING

63 The Principal gave a presentation on the Strategic Plan for 2015-2018 which now incorporated the key messages emerging from the governors' residential seminar in October 2014. The aim was to produce a brief version of the Plan together with a series of corporate plans that would contain the detail.

64 The governors were content that the Plan reflected their thinking from the residential event but, recognising that there were a significant range of issues to address, there needed to be an element of prioritisation. This was required not only to make the achievement of the objectives manageable but also to provide for the inevitable costs involved. Consequently, the governors felt that a development plan was also needed setting out the order of priority, how the various initiatives were to be funded and an assessment of risk.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

65 The Chief Operating Officer presented a report on the College's quality assurance. A self-assessment report was currently being written which represented a position statement based on the success rates of PLF. A priority for the College was to raise success rates which were currently variable but generally around the national average. Attention was also needed to the College's Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) with a view to ensuring as far as possible that students were placed on courses most suitable to their abilities and needs. A report would be submitted to the February Board meeting on the College's strategy for raising success rates.

66 The Chair commented that quality assurance needed linking appropriately to the strategic plan and that this was an area which was crucially important but not requiring large resources. The governors asked for reports in detail on students' progress at least quarterly. The Chief Operating Officer advised that governors would be invited to attend a series of themed 'learning walks' in the spring to increase their familiarity with the work of the College.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS & BUDGET 2014/15

67 The Board received the management accounts for the period to 31 October 2014 together with a revised budget for the year. At this stage, the budget was broadly on track although it was acknowledged that there were a number of significant risks to the achievement of the overall budget for the year. The College needed to move to a position of financial strength and there were challenges around reducing costs and creating more efficiency, for example, by increasing class sizes.

68 **Resolved** that the revised budget for 2014/15 be approved

RISK MANAGEMENT

69 The governors received for information the Risk Management update which had been reviewed by the Audit Committee.

CLERKSHIP

70 The interim Clerk, Ian James, was due to stand down shortly and he was thanked for his valuable contribution to the establishment of the College's governance arrangements following the incorporation of the College.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

71 3pm on Wednesday 25 February 2015

Chair

Date