

PROSPECTS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

26 OCTOBER 2018

MINUTES

Present: David Sherlock (Chair) External Governor
Judith Abbott Chief Executive
Sue Dare External Governor
Bala Mahendran External Governor
Peter McKee External Governor
Theo Steel External Governor
Cath Weissand Staff Member

In attendance: Robin Jones Clerk to the Board of Governors
Ros Parker Principal
Malcolm Rodrigues ESFA

793 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Board noted that apologies for absence had been submitted by Stephen Metcalfe and Rachel Richards given other commitments.

The Board noted that the meeting was quorate and could proceed.

794 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Sue Dare took the opportunity to remind the Board that she was acting as the Interim Principal of the National College of Creative Industries based in Purfleet.

795 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2018

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 27 September 2018 were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

796 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2018

The Board agreed that all of the items arising from the minutes of the last meeting requiring attention were addressed in the published agenda.

797 FINANCIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

The Board received and noted the ESFA letter dated 15 October 2018 which confirmed the Financial Health assessment grades following the submission of the Financial Plan for the period to 2020 – “inadequate” as expected.

The Finance Dashboard made interesting reading as a sector wide picture was provided. At face value the number of colleges with “satisfactory” or “inadequate” financial health was falling but much of this was thought to have resulted from the large number of mergers following the Area Reviews and the provision of restructuring funds.

The recent national Love Our Colleges initiative, including the march of Parliament, may bring rewards for the FE sector when the Chancellor of the Exchequer makes the Budget Statement on 29 October 2018. There was no doubt that a good case had been made for additional funding for colleges, but it was acknowledged that this had to be seen in the context of the many other calls for more money across the country to support services and investments.

798 RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE

The Board noted that the Recovery Plan continued to be a focus of attention for the Executive and others as appropriate and the key issues were covered in the item on Performance Monitoring (see item 799 below).

799 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Board received and considered at length the report of the Principal setting out the Performance Monitoring Overview covering:

- Recruitment to Study Programmes and Apprenticeships
- Recruitment and retention of academic staff
- Retention and achievement rates for 2017/18

The current position with regard to the recruitment of Study Programme learners and Apprentices was noted including:

- the substantial increase in the number of Study Programme learners which were not funded in the current year but post-merger would benefit South Essex College in 2019/20 given the basis of the national funding methodology
- the increase in Study Programme learners was largely due to the re-introduction of Level 1 provision which met a specific need and gave a pipeline of young people who would have the opportunity to progress onto an Apprenticeship in 2019/20
- the loss of some rail apprentices had been covered by increases in other areas including electrical and plumbing
- there was scope for more Apprenticeship provision – currently 99 vacancies were known to the College
- the value of the Apprentices now on roll at PROCAT would be calculated via the submission of the next ILR return given the variable values that different areas of provision had generated based on the national arrangements
- the recent discussion with TfL was thought to have been extremely positive and it was apparent that the changed management structure at TUCA was proving beneficial in building capacity
- the operation of TUCA continued to be a challenge for PROCAT – for example the time that it takes to travel between Basildon and Ilford took a lot of time out of the working day although, on the positive side, the recent EV review showed that delivery and performance were improving

Members asked about the cost of delivery for the increased number of Study Programme learners and were assured that these would be in line with the approved budget provision. This was proving to be possible by the efficient timetabling arrangements and increased

class sizes such as in English and maths where they were 27 learners or more in sessions. There was also an assurance given that South Essex College Executive was aware of the enrolment position and the fact that so many were unfunded in the current year although there would be benefits in 2019/20.

The position with regard to the achievement rates in 2017/19 was set out in some detail in the report presented to Members including the performance relative to the latest available national data. Whilst there were some positives it was recognised that there was scope for further improvements and, in response to a question from a Member, the Principal indicated that these could be achieved by continuing to focus on such aspects as strategies for Teaching Learning and Assessment and interventions with individuals.

The Board agreed following discussion:

- 1 to note the report of the Principal on performance
- 2 to welcome the intention of the Principal to circulate to Members a more detailed analysis of the achievement outcomes for 2017/18
- 3 to look forward to receiving at future meetings further updates including the College Self-Assessment Report which would provide an analysis of the achievement outcome position in 2017/18

800 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Board received and discussed the updated Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) which was RAG rated to show what needed prioritisation, what was on track and what was completed.

It was recognised that the QIP was more detailed than perhaps the Board would expect to receive but had been prepared in this format as part of the preparations for the merger whilst seeking to ensure that progress continued to be made in bringing about improvements in the months leading up to the planned merger.

There was an acknowledgement that the targets needed to be stretching but at the same time realistic and not too ambitious.

In respect of future growth opportunities, it was essential that due regard was taken of the costs of delivery and the overall budget position.

The Board agreed following discussion:

- 1 to receive and note the updated Quality Improvement Plan
- 2 to stress the importance of such factors as realism, communication to raise awareness and a continued focus on continuing to improve Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- 3 to look forward to receiving at the meeting of the Board on 20 December 2018 the Self-Assessment Report for 2017/18 which would provide a context for the updated Quality Improvement Plan.

801 SAFEGUARDING POLICY – UPDATE FOR 2018/19

The Board received and considered the proposed Safeguarding Policy for 2018/19 which had been prepared following a review and discussion involving the Board's Safeguarding Lead Member who was supportive of the contents subject to the points made below with regard to the responsibilities of Board Members and not including personal names but to focus on post designations.

The Board took the opportunity to seek confirmation that the College had in place the appropriate structure and arrangements to support an effective and efficient safeguarding service.

Members were assured that:

- appropriate policies and procedures were in place to put into effect the Safeguarding Policy
- staff across the College were aware of their responsibilities and they had been trained
- a single record was maintained centrally so that all staff had an up-to-date DBS clearance

The Board approved the updated Safeguarding Policy for 2018/19 subject to:

- 1 the section on the responsibilities of the Board Members being expanded (ie 3.1.1)
- 2 references were made as and where appropriate to the most up-to-date national arrangements including Keeping Children Safe in Education for 2018
- 3 the removal of individual names and to focus on post designations

802 BUDGET – 2018/19 - MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – SEPTEMBER 2018

The Board received the Management Accounts for September 2018 including:

- Income & Expenditure Account for the period to 30 September 2018
- Balance Sheet as at 30 September 2018
- Cash flow forecast to July 2019

A number of points were highlighted including:

- The deficit at the end of Period 2 was explained to be £(199)k which was £309k worse than the projected surplus of £110k for this point of the year
- The reason for the Period 2 deficit was thought to be as a result of Apprenticeship income received in August and September 2018 but being taken into 2017/18 as it related to achievement for apprentices who had now completed their programmes – this was being checked and would be confirmed in the Commentary for October 2018
- Commercial income was less than anticipated and would be addressed as the Budget for 2018/19 was based on an increase on the amount generated in 2017/18
- The Adult Education Budget at £362k was the same as in 2017/18 but which was not delivered in full although a business case was being prepared to retain the amount as, once the merger with South Essex College was completed, it was thought the full amount would be utilised
- The cashflow had been prepared on the basis of a prudent approach

The Board was advised that the position with regard to CSL and the lease cars continued to be outstanding with the College no longer in a position to cover the monthly costs from income due to CSL for learners as all those on the PROCAT ILR have now completed or been withdrawn. In the circumstances, legal advice had been obtained and the intention was to terminate the leases and then return the cars to the garage. If necessary, any amounts incurred by the College in the meantime would be pursued with CSL as bad debts rather than being written off.

The Board agreed following discussion:

- 1 to note the Management Accounts for September 2018 including the current level of deficit relative to the projected surplus and the likely reason for the position

- 2 to look forward to receiving a further update on the financial health of the College at the meeting scheduled for 29 November 2018 which, as explained below in item 805 below, may not take place and, if so, the Management Accounts would be circulated via email so that Members continued to have an up-to-date understanding of the financial health position of PROCAT
- 3 to support the Chief Executive in bringing to a satisfactory closure the position with CSL and the leases cars

803 MERGER – DISSOLUTION NOTICE

The Board noted that the Dissolution Notice setting out the planned merger of PROCAT and South Essex College had appeared in the Daily Mirror and Thurrock Independent so as to meet the requirement for publication in both a national and local paper.

804 MERGER CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The Board noted that the Merger Consultation Document had been published following the review at the last meeting and with a closing date for comments of 29 October 2018.

To date the feedback received was all supportive of the proposed merger with South Essex College.

A formal response to the Consultation Document would be prepared and published by the end of December 2018 (ie within two months of the closing date for comments).

805 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS – 2018/19

The Board noted the calendar of meetings for 2018/19 up to the date of the planned merger with South Essex College:

- Thursday 29 November 2018 at 1.30pm (see below on need for this meeting)
- Thursday 20 December 2018 at 1.30pm
- Tuesday 29 January 2019 at 1.30pm

Members recognised that, given the range and importance of issues to be addressed, it may be appropriate to arrange additional meetings and or change the planned meetings to seek to maximise attendance.

With regard to the meeting scheduled for 29 November 2018, Members agreed to review the need for a formal meeting nearer the time in recognition of making the best possible use of the limited time of the Executive when there was such a range of issues requiring attention.

806 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS OF BUSINESS

The Board considered other items which, on the grounds of confidentiality, are the subject of separate minutes only available for reference by, as appropriate, Members of the Board, the Executive and others designated to have access.

Note: the confidential items of business are covered in 807 to 814

Signed: _____ Date: _____