

**PROSPECTS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY**

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**31 OCTOBER 2016**

**MINUTES**

<b>Present:</b>	David Sherlock (Chair)	External Governor
	Neil Bates	Chief Executive/Principal
	Prof Rao Bhamidimarri	External Governor
	Daniel Bicks	Student Governor
	Bala Mahendran	External Governor
	Peter McKee	External Governor
	Rachel Richards	External Governor
	Theo Steele	External Governor
	Ruth Umerah	External Governor
	David Wells	External Governor

<b>In attendance:</b>	Robin Jones	Clerk to the Board of Governors
	Johnathan Bicks	Student (accompanying the Student Governor)
	Ros Parker	Director of Learning
	Helen Russell	Director of Business Development
	Neil Warren	Chief Operating Officer
	David Watson	National Project Adviser

**284 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Board noted that apologies for absence had been submitted by the following Members given other commitments:

- Stephen Metcalf External Governor
- Joanne Miller Staff Governor
- Kini Pathmanathan External Governor

**285 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Peter McKee drew attention once again to his involvement with City & Guilds.

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

**286 DIRECTOR OF LEARNING - ROS PARKER**

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, welcomed Ros Parker to her first meeting of the Board since taking up the appointment of Director of Learning on 5 September 2016.

Members acknowledged that Ros had already started to make a significant contribution to the College as had been seen during the earlier presentation of the report on student achievement in 2015/16 as part of the Strategic Review session.

**287 STRATEGIC REVIEW SESSION**

The Board recognised that, as in the previous two years, this meeting was taking place within the Strategic Review session and this had the benefit of providing Members with even greater opportunity to discuss the significant issues with the Executive and to provide direction for future priorities. This included student achievement outcomes and the actions to be taken to bring about improvements as well as current and future partnerships.

**288 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD**

The Clerk reported that, following a meeting by email of the Search & Governance Committee and the subsequent recommendation to the Board, Professor Rao Bhamidimarri had been appointed to serve on the Board for the period to 31 July 2020.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, welcomed Rao Bhamidimarri to his first meeting of the Board.

The Board noted that the Governance & Search Committee continued to progress the identification and suitability for appointment of at least one other possible Member and it was hoped that a recommendation would be made relatively soon.

**289 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 25 AUGUST 2016**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 25 August 2016 were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

**290 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 AUGUST 2016**

The Board agreed that, at this time, there were no items arising from the minutes of the last meeting requiring attention over and above those set out in the published agenda other than to highlight once again that a soft Health & Safety audit was scheduled for late 2016 with the action plan being presented to the Board in February 2017 so as to inform the approach to achieving an appropriate accreditation.

Members stressed to the Executive that, whilst it was appreciated that, quite rightly, attention was given to Health & Safety on a daily basis, it was thought that there must be no slippage in carrying out the audit as the aspiration of the College must be to demonstrate not only a high level of commitment but also to demonstrate that outstanding arrangements were in fact in place.

**291 AUDIT COMMITTEE – UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2016**

The Board received and noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 20 October 2016.

The main purpose of the meeting of the Committee was to receive and consider the Management Letter prepared by MHA MacIntyre Hudson following the review of the draft Financial Statements for 2015/16. The Members of the Committee had the benefit of the attendance of the responsible Audit Partner who provided a context for the review and findings.

It was explained that there were a small number of issues still the subject of attention and also the proposed Members Report had not yet been provided by the College. Therefore, the Financial Statements had not been included on the Agenda for this meeting of the Board for approval but would be presented on 7 December 2016 following a further meeting of the Audit Committee on 30 November 2016.

For the sake of completeness, the key outcomes from the review of the draft Financial Statements were noted by the Board as set out below.

The Going Concern opinion was noted to be positive but it was stressed that this will be kept under review until the Financial Statements are approved by the Board.

The “bottom lines” for 2015/16 were noted to be:

- The Group recorded a deficit before asset sales of (£87,000) (2015 surplus £172,00)
- Total income for the period was £9,071,000 (2015 £7,987,000) and total expenditure was £9,158,000 (2015 £7,809,000)
- Net assets of the Group were £8,019,000 (2015 £395,000).

The sale of Fairfax Drive and the Southend campus in July 2016 changed the financial health position completely. On the basis of the SFA financial health assessment, PROCAT was now “outstanding”.

The Board agreed to note the present position regarding the audit review of the Financial Statements and to look forward to being able to receive and consider the final out-turn and the opinion of MHA MacIntyre Hudson on 7 December 2016.

## **292 RISK REGISTER AND ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015/16**

The Board received the Risk Register and the Annual Report on Risk for 2015/16 as presented to and considered by the Audit Committee on 20 October 2016.

It was explained the Audit Committee had identified that, although English & maths were covered by the general statement in 2.1 of the current Risk Register, it was appropriate to highlight the risks for the College more explicitly.

Members reviewed the documentation and asked that, now that the Government had published more information on the introduction of the Levy and funding levels, the mitigating actions relating to Apprenticeships be reflected in the next update of the Risk Register.

The opportunity was taken to recognise the efforts of staff during the past few months in organising the relocation from Southend and to express the appreciation of Board Members to all those involved.

The updated Risk Register would be presented to the Audit Committee on 30 November 2016 and the schedule together with the Annual Report on Risk would be included in the pack for the Board on 7 December 2016 when it was anticipated that the Financial Statements would be approved.

## **293 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS – 2015/16**

The Board received and noted the following documents for information only at this stage and appreciated from the earlier discussion associated with the meeting of the Audit Committee on 20 October 2016 that the final versions would be presented to the Board on 7 December 2016:

- Management Letter prepared by the Auditors
- Letter of Representation from the College to the Auditors
- Draft Financial Statements for 2015/16

## **294 SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT – 2015/16**

The Board received and discussed the Safeguarding Annual Report for 2015/16.

The report addressed a range of issues including:

- The fact that the College considers that the safety and wellbeing of its students should be paramount and that students and staff should feel safe in their place of study/work
- The composition of the Safeguarding Team
- The arrangements for making known the availability of support including the confidential phone line which is available 24/7 365 days for those with concerns
- The training and support for staff including those when first appointed
- Enhanced DBS checks for all staff which are updated after three years for front line staff and four years for others
- The approach to Prevent and the fact that during the year it was thought appropriate to make an intervention although the young man concerned remained with the College and has progressed
- An example of good practice involving students in Construction Utilities & Infrastructure taking part in an initiative to raise their awareness of them being led into extreme behaviours – this was now being rolled out
- The IT infrastructure which enables monitoring to take place of the use of the IT systems – this resulted in 10 learners having their access privileges being withdrawn during 2015/16.

It was recognised from a review of the 35 referrals made during the year that a number of the young people attending the College are vulnerable and there has been an increase in those presenting complex mental health issues. Given these challenges it was thought to be impressive that achievement for this group was 80%.

The particular attention of Members was drawn to the position with regard to Looked After Children. It was pleasing to note that 3 out of the 4 young people had achieved their programme of study.

CSL was noted to have its own Safeguarding Officer.

The Board agreed following discussion:

- 1 to receive the Safeguarding Annual Report for 2015/16 which included an update on Prevent
- 2 to note the College's arrangements for embedding Safeguarding and Prevent in the College including the confirmation from the students present at this meeting of the

- Board that there is a high level of awareness in the College community of how to raise concerns
- 3 to note the confirmation from the Safeguarding Link Member that she maintains contact with Jill Terry as the Designated Safeguarding Officer and she has an appropriate level of comfort with the College arrangements
- 4 to place on record the appreciation of Members for the contribution to the College made by Jill Terry and the other members of the Safeguarding Team.

## **295 PRINCIPAL'S AND EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

The Board received and discussed the comprehensive report prepared by the Principal and the members of the Executive on a range of issues including:

- the final Dashboards for 2015/16 and the first draft of the Strategic Plan Work Strands Dashboard for 2016/17
- training location for Southend based carpentry apprentices – specifically that, although attempts had been made to make use of a base in Basildon, the decision had been taken to move the provision to Canvey where it was hoped employers and learners would see the benefits of the facilities and support
- Institutes of Technology
- quality of provision – addressed in some detail during the Strategic Review session and also as part of the review of the draft SAR
- curriculum development – mainstream and apprenticeships
- operational priorities
- student recruitment in 2016/17
- the arrangements for starting recruitment for 2017/18
- commercial provision
- preparing for the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in May 2017
- GTA Construction – launch
- Employer satisfaction

Members took the opportunity to ask questions on the various themes to understand the issues and the relative importance including the likely impact for students, employers and others.

Whilst noting the student recruitment position Members were pleased to learn that there had been an increase in the number of young women studying STEM subjects at the College. There had also been an increase in the number of minority ethnic learners at the College.

The position regarding the proposed Institutes of Technology was noted with great interest including the current understanding that the Chancellor of Exchequer would announce the launch of the initiative as part of the Autumn Statement on 23 November 2016.

The Employer Survey results for 2015/16 had now been published by the SFA and PROCAT had a score of 7.5 (out of 10) which was an improvement from 2014/15 when there was a score of 6.9 although the outcome fell short of the target of 8.

The key themes of stronger areas and weaker areas were noted together with the detailed ratings from the Ipsos MORI survey.

It was explained that the outcomes were disappointing relative to the College's own survey conducted in April 2016 although this had less responses with 59 against 152 for the SFA survey.

The issues were being addressed including via the launch of the GTA for Construction planned for January 2017 when a number of employers would be invited to become involved. A planning meeting was being arranged for mid November 2016.

It was also thought that the full implementation of One File and use by all employers would improve communication and awareness to a significant extent.

The Board agreed after discussion:

- 1 to thank the Principal and the Executive for the informative report
- 2 to look forward to receiving further updates at forthcoming meetings and outside of the calendar of meetings when there were significant developments
- 3 to note that the annual comprehensive report on student recruitment was scheduled to be presented to the meeting of the Board on 7 December 2016 and this would address the equality and diversity considerations of the student profile
- 4 to acknowledge that, given the number of initiatives being addressed with the probability of more to be added, there was a question of the capacity and a paper should be presented to an early meeting of the Board of what was needed to support the achievement of the various targets and ambitions for the College.

## **296 ENGLISH & MATHS STRATEGY**

The Board received and considered the proposed English & Maths Strategy.

It was recognised that the associated issues had been discussed at length earlier in the day during the Strategic Review session given the close links with the consideration of student achievement in 2015/16.

The key issues to be noted in the context of the disappointing English and maths outcomes in 2015/16 included:

- the approach put in place for 2015/16 was now recognised to have been too ambitious
- it was essential that an appropriately qualified member of staff was in post to lead and a new Head of English, Maths & IT had started with the College that day
- accountability for the application of the English & Maths Strategy had to sit within the Executive and the Director of Learning would have the responsibility

The Board agreed, following discussion, to welcome and support the introduction of the new English & Maths Strategy.

## **297 DOCUMENT CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS**

The presentation of the English & Maths Strategy prompted a question about the College's arrangements for document control via the use of footers and or other appropriate means so that staff and others had confidence that they were making use of the up-to-date versions.

The Director of Learning, on behalf of the Executive, offered to take this forward so that an assurance could be given to Members that a system of document control was in place and was being implemented across the College.

## **298 AREA REVIEW**

The Board recalled that the programme of the Essex Area Review meetings, which start on 7 November 2016, had been circulated previously and noted at the meeting of the Board on 25 August 2016.

A comprehensive pack of information had now been prepared by the College to support the Area Review process and this had been copied to Members of the Board.

It was now known that the College visit would take place on 9 November 2016 when two Members of the FE Commissioner's Team would spend the day in College to gain a greater awareness of the organisation including the future plans. The day would include a session with a group of Members of the Board but without the Principal present.

The position for PROCAT was agreed to be:

- PROCAT was not a GFE despite its formal incorporation but a College of Advanced Technology
- Employer focussed and driven
- STEM curriculum
- National provider whilst based in Basildon but with the scope for others to join the PROCAT Group
- Duplication of provision was wasteful and should be avoided with the neighbouring GFEs offering Levels 1 and 2 in appropriate areas and students then progressing to PROCAT for Level 3 and beyond

The Board agreed to note the current position with regard to the Area Review process, including the planned visit to PROCAT on 9 November 2016, and to look forward to receiving updates as the Essex Steering Group meetings progressed.

## **299 SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) 2015/16 AND THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QIP) 2016/17**

The Board received and considered at considerable length the draft SAR for 2015/16 and the QIP for 2016/17.

The honesty of the commentary was particularly welcomed by Members including the summary of why PROCAT could not yet claim to be "outstanding".

All of the sections of the SAR were reviewed with Members giving particular attention to the extent of the focus on improving Teaching, Learning & Assessment and the impact of students and employers.

The proposed grades for the different elements of the Common Inspection Framework were considered with questions being asked of the Executive to seek to understand and justify the grades. This included the proposed blanket "Good" for all aspects of the CSL provision which it was known had some associated concerns in terms of outcomes. Given the progression to employment which was above national averages it was thought that the

grade could be justified but not when English and maths were taken into account. For this reason the grade would be amended in the final SAR.

In terms of the commentary relating to Leadership and Management the associated issues raised during the discussion included the ever-increasing costs of pensions for colleges and other organisations although, due to the way that the College was structured, this was not a material factor for PROCAT and, also, the importance of maintaining the ratio of costs of staff versus other expenditure as the College was relatively cost efficient.

It was explained that the QIP, as presented, was to be seen as a high-level document with detailed action plans in place to support the achievement of the various targets and initiatives.

Members acknowledged how useful they found the Learning Walks in gaining an understanding of the College on a day to day basis without straying the line between governance and management. Further activities were being organised and would be recorded so that there was a central reference point of the various Learning Walks and the associated reflections.

The Board agreed, following a wide ranging and robust discussion when the opportunity had been taken by Members to challenge the Executive on the contents:

- 1 to place on record the view that the SAR (including the proposed grades subject to the change to CSL detailed above) and QIP as presented were appropriate documents which provided a clear indication of the strengths and areas for improvement including the main priorities for 2016/17
- 2 to welcome the plans now in place to bring about early improvements in the provision of and outcomes from the English & maths GCSE and Functional Skills sessions including the collaboration with a neighbouring College (SEEVIC)
- 3 that the Executive will put in place immediate arrangements to track progress against the QIP using a RAG rating system and that this will be shared with Members on a monthly basis so that any actual or potential slippages may be highlighted and addressed
- 4 to note the commitment of the Executive to ensuring that staff across the College will continue to be supported to bring about the required range of improvements including improving the learner experience in both the classroom and workshop and also with target setting and tracking - the full implementation of One File was central to the latter process
- 5 to recognise the importance of regarding both the SAR and QIP as “live” documents to be used and updated on an ongoing basis
- 6 to thank Ros Parker and the others involved in the preparation of the SAR and QIP

### **300    INSOLVENCY REGIME**

The Board recalled that at the meeting on 20 July 2016 it had been noted that the Government was consulting on proposed insolvency arrangements for colleges.

The Clerk explained that the Government had now published its response to the consultation and, having considered the comments made, it had been decided to proceed with the introduction of a statutory insolvency framework for the FE and sixth form college sector. The arrangements require legislation which will be introduced as soon as the

Parliamentary time permits and the detailed rules and regulations will be the subject of further consultation.

It was understood that the intention of the Government is to have the insolvency regime in place for 2018/19.

**301 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS – 2016/17**

The Calendar of Meetings for 2016/17 was noted to be:

- Wednesday 7 December 2016
- Wednesday 8 February 2017
- Wednesday 10 May 2017
- Wednesday 19 July 2017

Unless otherwise agreed, meetings would commence at 2pm and take place at Basildon.

Members recognised that there may be a need to change and/or add additional meetings given other factors including the impact of the Area Review process.

**302 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 Members of the Board, the Executive and others designated to have access.

*Note: the confidential items of business covered 303 to 306.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_