

PROSPECTS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

22 FEBRUARY 2018

MINUTES

Present: David Sherlock (Chair) External Governor
Judith Abbott Chief Executive
Prof Rao Bhamidimarri External Governor
Jamie Deane Student Member
Bala Mahendran External Governor
Peter McKee External Governor
Theo Steel External Governor
Ruth Umerah External Governor
Cath Weissand Staff Member

In attendance: Robin Jones Clerk to the Board of Governors
Ros Parker Principal
Josh Burrage Data Analyst (for item 574 only)

564 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

The Clerk advised that Rachel Richards had been delayed due to a business commitment but hoped that she would arrive shortly. In the event it was not possible for Ms Richards to attend any part of the meeting.

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

565 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Whilst not of direct relevance to the current agenda, Ruth Umerah took this opportunity to update Members with an outline of her business relationships with the Education & Training Foundation and others.

566 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD – STUDENT MEMBER

The Clerk advised the Board that all Members had agreed, via an exchange of emails, to approve the recommendation of the Governance & Search Committee that Jamie Deane be appointed to serve on the Board as the Student Member until 31 July 2018.

The Chair, on behalf of all Members, welcomed Jamie Deane to his first meeting.

567 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2017 AND 31 JANUARY 2018

The Minutes of the meetings of the Board of Governors held on 13 December 2017 and 31 January 2018 were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

568 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2017 AND 31 JANUARY 2018

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

569 FE COMMISSIONER

The Board received and noted the letter dated 9 February 2018 from the FE Commissioner which notified the Chief Executive that PROCAT had been referred for intervention.

One of the Deputy FE Commissioners and an FE Adviser would visit the College on 5 and 6 March 2018 to meet with the Executive, Board Members and others to hear views and to review documentation.

Given experience elsewhere in the sector and comments made by representatives of the ESFA, an outcome could be an FE Commissioner led SPA to identify a merger partner for PROCAT.

David Sherlock, Peter McKee and Theo Steel supported by the Clerk confirmed that they were available to meet the FE Commissioner's Team during 5 and 6 March 2018 and this would be reflected in the itinerary to be provided by the College prior to the two days.

The outcomes from the visit of the FE Commissioner's Team would be a major item of business for the meeting of the Board now arranged to take place on Thursday 22 March 2018 at 1.30pm.

570 FE COMMISSIONER – ANNUAL REPORT – 2016/17

The Board received and noted the Annual Report of the FE Commissioner for the period 1 September 2016 to 31 August 2017.

571 FINANCIAL HEALTH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

At the Special Meeting on 31 January 2018 the Board had received and noted the letter dated 30 January 2018 from the ESFA addressed to the Chair of the Board which confirmed that the College was the subject of a Financial Health Notice to Improve.

The letter was included in the Agenda Pack for this meeting given the direct relevance to a number of the issues before the Board.

It was recalled that the Notice to Improve was prompted by the inadequate financial health assessment set out in the ESFA letter dated 25 January 2018 addressed at the recent Special Meeting of the Board.

Note: Rao Bhamidimarri joined the meeting

572 RECOVERY PLAN

The Board received and discussed the report of the Chief Executive & Accounting Officer in respect of the Recovery Plan as presented to the special meeting on 30 January 2018.

The report provided an update on a range of related issues including the preliminary feedback from the ESFA following receipt of the draft Recovery Plan and the updated Financial Plan.

The Members of the Board and the Executive had a wide-ranging discussion as outlined in the Part B Minutes of the meeting.

573 BUDGET – 2017/18 – MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The Board received and discussed the Management Accounts for January 2018 (Period 6 of 2017/18).

In addition to a comprehensive commentary prepared by the Chief Executive the Management Accounts included:

- The Income and Expenditure Account
- Balance Sheet as at 31 January 2018
- Cashflow Forecast

The main points highlighted were:

- The position at Period 6 was slightly better than the budget projection
- A small cohort of learners (9) would start this month primarily on a new HGV maintenance apprenticeship although the overall number was less than the 31 target for February recruitment; this still provides a positive variance to the reforecast budget for the year as no February strtas were assumed for this purpose
- The College was seeking to mitigate the impact of the anticipated shortfall of activity funded under the Adult Education allocation – provision was scheduled for the summer term but there was an option of subcontracting some of the allocation although the revised budget did not take into account such costs or any claw-back related to under-delivery
- The Executive was tracking income and expenditure continuously so as to identify any variations against the revised forecast, so the issues may be addressed
- There was a need to fill some of the current vacancies to cover teaching notwithstanding the importance of controlling expenditure

The Board agreed:

- 1 to note the Management Accounts for January 2018 and the various points highlighted during the presentation of the report
- 2 to note, in particular, the cashflow position and the need based on current projections for a cash injection by July 2018
- 3 to look forward to receiving the Management Accounts for February 2018, including, in particular, the updated cashflow forecast, at the meeting of the Board now scheduled for 22 March 2018

Note: Josh Burrage joined the meeting for the following item only

574 QUALITY MONITORING

The Board received the report of the Principal which provided data and information on the performance of the College against contract and targets set within the Quality Improvement Plan.

The context for the review and challenge of the data and information provided included the recent meeting of the new Quality Improvement Task Force which included Board Member Prof Rao Bhamidimarri. Further meetings were to be arranged.

A number of important factors were highlighted including:

- The QIP was currently at amber based on the RAG rating with the recruitment and retention of staff to improve the quality of the learner experience being a high risk
- The performance against the Adult Education allocation was a high risk as explained in the earlier item on the Management Accounts for January 2018 – this could have an impact on the overall Recovery Plan due to a further loss of funds due to a potential clawback
- The number of out of funded learners had been reduced considerably since September 2017 – this was by 50% and this was continuing with efforts to support learners to succeed being relentless
- Data capture and reporting arrangements had improved considerably over previous years
- Opportunities to enhance the learning experience through blended and independent learning were being explored

A number of actions had been identified and were being pursued with due urgency:

- To accelerate the review of staff terms, conditions and benefits
- To review the recruitment strategy for securing delivery staff
- Maximise the Adult Education allocation and, if appropriate, sub-contract within the budget allocation
- Continue the drive on reducing the number of out of funded learners whilst seeking to ensure maximum possible success

The Data Analyst then provided the Board with a presentation on live data so that Members understood the current position in relation to College performance.

The Board agreed following discussion:

- 1 to note the report of the Principal and the presentation of the Data Analyst with regard to quality and performance
- 2 to welcome the commitment of the College to support students to achieve on a timely basis
- 3 to note, in particular, that far better use of data was being made in College to support interventions as and when these were appropriate
- 4 that consideration be given to the introduction of incentives to achieve which may be a means to motivate and reward students

- 5 to look forward to receiving further updates at forthcoming meetings including the provision of up-to-date end of year predications and the impact on the assessment of Minimum Levels of Performance

Note: Josh Burrage left the meeting

575 EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The Board received and considered the Executive's report with contributions from the Principal and the Director of Business Development.

Given the range of issues covered the key issues are addressed separately in these Minutes as set out below.

576 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal presented an update on a number of issues:

- Student attendance
- Student retention
- Out of Funded learners
- Student Achievement
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment

It was recognised that a number of these issues were also covered via other items on the Agenda.

The Principal was thanked for an informative report which enabled Members to have a good understanding of progress and the issues giving any cause for concern

577 DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT'S REPORT

In the absence of the Director of Business Development the Principal presented the update report which covered a range of issues including:

- Student recruitment – 2018/19
- Commercial provision – 2017/18
- Business development activities

Attention was given to the current position with regard to 2018/19 enrolment particularly in the context of meeting the targets set out in the Recovery Plan and revised Financial Plan.

The Basildon Open Event was scheduled to take place on 8 March - a month later than last year – as this would link to the National Apprenticeship Week for 2018. The consequential applications from the event had not, therefore, been received and processed on the system. However, whilst apprenticeship vacancies were higher than last year at this point, which was encouraging, the main concern was the volume of suitable applicants.

The commercial provision at Basildon was noted to be 17% below target due to staff shortages. Appointments had now been made and so there were opportunities although the release of the 18th Edition may not be capitalised on until 2018/19. Overall income was at 58% of budget target and 45% of sales target although it was acknowledged by the Executive that more sales focus was needed urgently to make up lost ground particularly at Basildon.

The Board agreed:

- 1 to receive and note the report of the Director of Business Development including the position with regard to commercial income in 2017/18 and early recruitment for 2018/19
- 2 to look forward to receiving further updates at forthcoming meetings of the Board so as to understand progress toward achieving targets and the actions taken to address any shortfalls.

578 BEHAVIOURAL DEVELOPMENT IN STANDARDS – OUTWARD BOUND TRUST PILOT

The Board noted the background to the recent pilot relating to behavioural development which was now a formal part of the Apprenticeships Standards.

The pilot programme took place as recently as the week of 12 February 2018 and it was pleasing to note that there had been positive feedback from both employers and the apprentices who had participated.

To illustrate the pilot the Members were shown a number of photographs taken during the recent week away.

579 INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY – UPDATE

The Board received the report of the Director of Business Development which had been prepared in the context of the acknowledgment by the Board on 31 January 2018 that PROCAT was not now in a position to lead an application to be an Institute of Technology.

The Board agreed, following discussion:

- 1 to support the opportunities for PROCAT to join in collaborative applications with South Essex College and Barking & Dagenham College on the basis that they were different to each other and not necessarily in direct competition
- 2 to look forward to progress updates on the Institutes of Technology initiative at forthcoming meetings of the Board.

580 EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Board noted that the Employer Engagement Strategy was in draft form and it was agreed, therefore, that consideration would be deferred until the meeting scheduled for 22 March 2018.

581 MARKETING & RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

The Board received a comprehensive document setting out the approach to marketing and recruitment in 2018/19.

The key priorities were noted to be:

- to achieve a 25% increase in applications from female and BAME applicants
- to achieve a conversion rate of applicants of learners of at least 1:4 and ideally 1:3

- to increase high quality student applications through effective marketing activities, increased attendance at open events (by at least 10%) and launching the Alumni to support progression recruitment
- to improve the on-boarding process ensuring effective and timely communications to applicants from attracting them to apply through to enrolment
- to increase new levy paying companies working with PROCAT for apprenticeship recruitment (by 20% / 5 additional companies)

The Board agreed, following discussion:

- 1 to note the document presented with the Agenda setting out the approach to marketing and recruitment in 2018/19
- 2 to look forward to receiving at the meeting of the Board on 22 March 2018 a brief document (possibly no more than 2 sides of A4) setting out the Marketing Strategy supported by an action plan so that there was clarity as to what was to be done, by when etc
- 3 to acknowledge that, given past performance of not achieving enrolment targets, it was essential that the College increased recruitment and whilst the targets needed to be stretching they were realistic
- 4 to look forward to hearing more of the proposed approach of the Executive to recruit a marketing specialist to bring about the necessary changes in approach and to improve the impact of marketing and recruitment strategies

582 HEALTH & SAFETY

The Board received the update on Health & Safety prepared by the Head of Facilities & Estates.

The report included information on:

- accident statistics – 35 so far in 2017/18
- 2 staff RIDDOR incidents
- The introduction of the “near miss” campaign
- The need to organise a number of staff training courses including First Aid, Fire Marshal, Gas Handling, PAT etc as qualifications expired for existing staff and in recognition of the high staff turnover
- The arrangements for periodic and routine inspections

The report also provided an update on the current position with regard to the preparations for the planned British Safety Council 5* Award – of the 48 actions identified at the pre-commencement audit 14 were closed and 34 were still being addressed.

The Board agreed to note the report on Health & Safety and, in doing so, to welcome the introduction of the “near miss” campaign which it was thought by Members to be a positive development by the College.

583 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, BEHAVIOUR AND WELFARE INCLUDING SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT

The Board received an update on Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare including Safeguarding and Prevent.

The designation of Claire Steadman, Head of Safety & Welfare, as the Safeguarding Lead was noted.

Ruth Umerah reported that, immediately before the meeting of the Board, she had met Claire as the Board Link Member for Safeguarding.

In response to a question relating to the type of Safeguarding issues now being addressed by the College, the particular attention of Members was drawn to the number of people declaring a mental health condition. It was appreciated that a similar position was being reported across the education sector.

Since the last such report to the Board (on 13 December 2017) it was noted that a Prevent referral had been made and the actions of the College in this respect had been found to be appropriate.

The Board agreed to note the report on Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare including Safeguarding and Prevent and, in doing so, to look forward to receiving a further update at the May 2018 meeting by which time the small backlog in staff training would have been addressed by the College.

584 HUMAN RESOURCES

The Board received and discussed at length the report of the Head of Human Resources covering the period January to December 2017 in terms of the staff profile including turnover, length of service etc

The main focus for the discussion was on the staff turnover which was a major factor for the College in terms of the time spent in recruiting and inducting new colleagues but also the impact on teaching and learning of changes in personal and, on occasions, difficulties in providing appropriate cover. The associated loss of knowledge from the College organisation was also an important consideration.

There were a number of approaches that could be pursued to improve on staff recruitment and retention as well as the morale of those who stayed with the College in the longer term including addressing the pension position.

The Board agreed:

- 1 to note the report relating to the staff profile and associated issues during the period January to December 2017
- 2 to recognise that staff recruitment, retention and turnover was one of the top three risks for the College in achieving the objectives set out in the Recovery Plan
- 3 to ask the Executive to arrange for the presentation to the meeting of the Board on 22 March 2018 a "Peoples Strategy" setting out briefly the options for the College to address the attrition and the impact that this was having on teaching and learning as well as the support services

585 HUMAN RESOURCES – JOB EVALUATION PROJECT

The Board received the report of the Head of Human Resources relating to the Job Evaluation Project which, it was noted, was on track for completion following the final panel

meeting on 19 April 2018 with the intention of having the new salary structure in place for 2018/19.

The Board agreed to look forward to receiving further updates on the Job Evaluation Project which would need to be linked to the proposals to be set out in the requested “Peoples Strategy”.

586 PROSPECTS LEARNING FOUNDATION

The Board agreed to defer consideration of the item on the Prospects Learning Foundation until the meeting on 22 March 2018 so that the status of the remaining College Companies could be confirmed.

587 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – EXTERNAL MEMBER

The Clerk advised the Board that Angela Clarke, the External Member serving on the Audit & Risk Committee, had resigned from the Committee due to a change of employer.

The Board agreed:

- 1 to note the resignation of Angela Clarke from membership of the Audit & Risk Committee
- 2 to place on record the appreciation of the Board for the contribution made by Angela Clarke to the work of the Audit & Risk Committee
- 3 to recognise that, whilst it was not a requirement to have such an External Member, there were benefits of having such a person on the Audit & Risk Committee and, therefore, the Chief Executive and the Clerk should seek to identify a person to join the Committee

588 GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS

A Member asked about the College’s preparations for the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in May 2018.

It was confirmed that the implications for the College were being addressed having regard to capacity and the opportunities to partner with others.

The Board agreed to look forward to receiving an update on the GDPR at a forthcoming meeting.

589 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS – 2017/18

The Board noted the approved Calendar of Meetings for the remainder of 2017/18 as follows:

- Thursday 22 March 2018 – proposed location Basildon at 1.30pm
- Friday 27 April 2018 – proposed location Basildon at 11am (start time to be confirmed)
- Thursday 17 May 2018 – proposed location Basildon at 1.30pm
- Thursday 19 July 2018 – proposed location Basildon at 1.30pm

Members had recognised that there was a need to meet in mid to late June – the Clerk would seek to identify the availability of Members for such a meeting.

590 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 591 to 597.

Signed: _____ Date: _____