

PROSPECTS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

25 AUGUST 2016

MINUTES

Present:	David Sherlock (Chair)	External Governor
	Neil Bates	Chief Executive/Principal
	Daniel Bicks	Student Governor
	Bala Mahendran	External Governor
	Peter McKee	External Governor
	Stephen Metcalf	External Governor
	Joanne Miller	Staff Governor
	Kini Pathmanathan	External Governor
	David Wells	External Governor
In attendance:	Robin Jones	Clerk to the Board of Governors
	Johnathon Bicks	Student (accompanying the Student Governor)
	Tamsin Jones	Interim Director of Learning
	Helen Russell	Director of Business Development
	Neil Warren	Chief Operating Officer

269 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

- Rachel Richards
- Theo Steel
- Ruth Umerah

270 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.

271 GOVERNANCE & SEARCH COMMITTEE

The Board received and noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Governance & Search Committee held on 20 July 2016.

It was also noted that a virtual meeting of the Committee had taken place to address a recommended appointment of a person to serve on the Board – see item 272 below.

272 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

The Board approved the appointment of Stephen Metcalfe as an External Governor with immediate effect for the period to 31 July 2020 as recommended by the Governance & Search Committee.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, welcomed Stephen to membership and this meeting.

The Board noted that the Governance & Search Committee continued to progress the identification and suitability for appointment of two other possible Members and it was hoped that recommendations would be made relatively soon.

273 DIRECTOR OF LEARNING - APPOINTMENT OF ROS PARKER

The appointment of Ros Parker as the new Director of Learning was noted having been confirmed by Members via email following the interviews.

The Chair reported that Ros would take up the post on 5 September 2016 although she had already spent some time in College to prepare for the role.

Members noted that the post had attracted a number of really good candidates and the appointment process had proved to be both interesting and demanding for all concerned.

The Members of the Selection Panel were thanked for the time devoted to the appointment.

274 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 20 JULY 2016

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 20 July 2016 were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the Chair subject to the amendment of "careers" to read "carers" in item 258.

275 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JULY 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 note that:

- Item 246 - preparations were underway to provide the Dashboards for 2016/17
- Item 247 - Economic Appraisal – an Executive Summary is to be prepared which will identify the key issues including the earning power of STEM Apprentices as this will be of considerable interest to potential Apprentices and, no doubt, parents who may not have an understanding of the range of opportunities now available
- Item 259 – Health & Safety – a soft 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.

On a related issue to the item on the Economic Appraisal, the Board was interested to note the intention to launch an Alumni Group with a target launch date of January 2017 which would assist in checking the progress of former students and Apprentices as their careers develop.

Members also recognised the importance of promoting Apprenticeships in schools before students made choices as to FE and HE routes and, whilst there were still some barriers, it was pleasing to note that PROCAT had extended the relationships with a number of schools.

276 FINANCIAL PLAN

The Board noted that, following the discussion and approval on 20 July 2016, the Financial Plan had been submitted to the SFA.

277 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT – 2015/16

The Board noted that a comprehensive review of the student achievement outcomes for 2015/16 was underway and would inform the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report and the associated Quality Improvement Plan for presentation to Members in October 2016.

The opportunity was taken to comment on the GCSE English and maths outcomes published that day, 25 August 2016.

Members appreciated that, in accordance with Government policy, far more students were taking GCSE English and maths in college than in the past. Given the experience in schools over the previous 11 or so years it was not surprising that achievement outcomes across the country as a whole were relatively low.

The Board:

- noted the brief update on English and maths results in 2015/16 and that further more detailed information would be presented to the Board in October 2016
- noted that students commencing in September 2016 would have a focus on English and maths from day one of their course
- agreed that Theo Steel would act as the Link Governor on English and maths and would liaise with the Executive to gain a greater understanding of practice and the approaches for the future
- agreed to look forward to receiving the revised English & Maths Strategy at the October 2016 meeting of the Board
- noted that as part of the approach for 2016/17 PROCAT was working with SEEVIC to share a post and in doing so to seek to improve English and maths for the benefit of learners.

278 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:

- Completion of the sale of the two Southend campuses
- Strategic and business planning for 2016/17
- Managing the estates relocations and modifications
- Building the strategy for the network of Colleges of Advanced Technology
- Preparing major tenders for London Underground and the TUCA Academy
- Preparing for external validation of a new degree apprenticeship
- Closing the year end finances and success rates
- Handling and processing the large number of student applications

The sale of both the Fairfax Drive campus and the Southend campus were completed on 29 July 2016. As a result, the short term mortgages have been cleared and the SFA financial health rating has become “outstanding”.

The Board recalled that the sale of the Southend campus was one of the desired outcomes from the first Planning Session held post incorporation.

The longstanding commitment of the College to make a payment to staff on the sale of Fairfax Drive had now been progressed. This amounted to £100 for each year of service with a cap at £1,000. Payment had been arranged in the August pay run.

The Principal highlighted the documentation received from the Department for Education in respect of Institutes of Technology and the invitation to participate in a prototyping process. It was appreciated that PROCAT would not be the only organisation to receive such an invitation but at the time of the meeting there was no indication of the number involved. The expectation was that a decision would be made by the Government on the outcome by the time of the Autumn Statement on 23 November 2016 although there was a recognition that there were a range of factors to be taken into account including the Sainsbury Report and the Skills Plan published in June 2016.

The position with regard to the anticipated merger with a third party resulting them joining the PROCAT group was noted. A Non-Disclosure Agreement had been signed and it was expected that the Heads of Terms would be signed shortly which would be followed by a due diligence review.

Discussions also continued with another organisation and it was hoped that progress would be made towards an agreement which, following due diligence, would also lead to them joining the PROCAT group.

As with the other potential partnership, these issues would be major themes at the forthcoming Strategic Review session and Board meeting in October 2016.

The outcomes from the two day Strategic & Planning Event attended by the Senior Team on 1 and 2 August 2016 were noted including the arrangements for operationalising the College Strategic Plan priorities by Faculty and the impact on the management structure – this included the planned appointment of a new Head of Faculty to lead on the provision in civil engineering, surveying & planning and project management.

The securing of the validation from the University of Essex for the degree apprenticeship in embedded electronic engineering was welcomed by the Board.

The Board challenged the assertion in the report that PROCATs marketing strategy was working notwithstanding the increase in the number of applications being received from potential students. The detailed annual analysis of recruitment will be prepared a little later in the year and presented to the Board. This will address the points made during the discussion on the College marketing strategy.

The Interim Director of Learning explained the basis of her report which addressed:

- establishing strong curriculum teams to deliver excellence
- the focus on the culture of accountability

- progress with the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report for 2015/16 and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2016/17
- the preparations for the start of the new year which took into account the moves from the Southend campus

The Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training, England issued by the Education & Training Foundation (ETF) were also received and noted by the Board.

Members welcomed the information provided by the Interim Director of Learning which prompted discussion and an exchange of views which would inform the content of the SAR and QIP to be presented to the Board in October 2016.

The report finished with a helpful summary of the progress made by the College since incorporation in September 2014 and the challenges ahead.

The Board agreed:

- to thank the Principal and the Senior Team for the comprehensive report which was thought to be invaluable in understanding College performance and the issues to be addressed and in doing so providing Board Members with the opportunity to challenge and influence the priorities
- to note, in particular, the position on the range of issues covered including the invitation to participate in the prototyping process for the Institutes of Technology and the discussions with another organisation which should lead to them joining the PROCAT group
- to place on record the thanks and congratulations of Board Members for all those involved in progressing the degree validation with the University of Essex
- to look forward to receiving further updates on the various issues in October 2016 with a view to making firm decisions on the partnership opportunities
- to note that a number of issues would be the subject of reports to future meetings of the Board including the Digital Strategy, HR Strategy and the review of student recruitment which would provide an opportunity to review the Marketing Strategy.

279 AREA REVIEW

The Board noted the programme of the Essex Area Review meetings which start on 7 November 2016.

It was appreciated that there would be an opportunity for Members to engage in the process with briefings taking place after Steering Group 1 and 4 (7 November 2016 and 27 February 2017). In addition, a small group of Members would be involved in the visit to PROCAT which was to be arranged for the representatives of the FE Commissioner as part of the Area Review.

Whilst it was true to acknowledge that a number of College mergers were taking place as a result of the Area Review process and there was a possibility that some Essex colleges may favour a merger with PROCAT, the point would be made to the Area Review team that the College was not a GFE but a specialist institution, with a focus on STEM, employer driven and

with a national perspective. Furthermore, the College was financially strong – indeed “outstanding” based on the SFA methodology.

This being so, there was no reason why involvement in the Area Review process should disrupt the long term plans of PROCAT including the establishment of the PROCAT group.

The College would be invited to provide the Area Review team with data and information before Steering Group 1 and this would be shared with Board Members before the forthcoming Strategic Planning session in October 2016.

280 LEARNER VOICE STRATEGY

The Board received and considered the proposed updated version of the Learner Voice Strategy.

It was appreciated that, although not one of the documents requiring specific Board approval, it was useful to give Members the opportunity to comment on the contents.

Members went through the document and provided feedback to the Executive including on the table of responsibilities (pages 5 and 6 of the document).

The section relating to the Student Member would be revised so as to make clear the arrangements leading to appointment of a student to serve on the Board.

The Board agreed, following review, to support the adoption of the updated Learner Voice Strategy subject to the incorporation of the small number of proposed changes.

281 HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY AND RELATED ISSUES

The Board received with great interest a presentation to the SLT session on 1 August 2016 relating to the preparation of the new Human Resources Strategy and a range of associated matters.

Debbie Wallace, the recently appointed Head of HR, had provided what was thought by SLT Members to be an excellent presentation and this was very much welcomed by the Board.

The focus included the attraction, recruitment and retention of talented people and the proposed development of a Balanced Scorecard.

The Board agreed to note the presentation and to look forward to receiving the HR Strategy and Balanced Scorecard as soon as they were ready.

282 SUB-CONTRACTING POLICY 2016/17

The Board received and considered the proposed Sub-Contracting Policy for 2016/17.

The role of sub-contractors was explained – they were usually involved in niche provision with relatively small numbers.

Currently there were five sub-contractors although there was a proposal to add another one to support the CSL provision in 2016/17.

There was a recognition that there was an essential need to carry out a full due diligence review before partnerships were established and once they were in place there were ongoing checks of the quality of provision. It was noted that the College had robust arrangements in place.

In response to a question from a Member the Board noted that the College ensured that English and maths were reflected in the provision as appropriate.

The Board agreed, following discussion, to approve the Sub-Contracting Policy for 2016/17 subject to the Executive:

- maintaining a close scrutiny of the partnerships so as to minimise the risks which do exist from such provision
- being prepared to terminate any such partnerships as and when there were significant concerns with regard to the provision and the experience for learners.

283 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS – 2016/17

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

- Friday 21 and Saturday 22 October 2016 (Strategic Review Session to include a formal meeting of the Board)
- Wednesday 7 December 2016
- Wednesday 8 February 2017
- Wednesday 10 May 2017
- Wednesday 19 July 2017

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.

Clerk's Note: Following this meeting of the Board it was agreed, following consultation with Members, to move the Strategic Review Session, incorporating a meeting of the Board, to Monday 31 October and Tuesday 1 November 2016

Signed: _____ Date: _____