

**Minutes of Norton Radstock College Governing Body meeting
held on Wednesday 23 March 2011 at 6.30pm**

Present:	Mr C Dando (Chair)	CD
	Mrs S Arayan (Principal)	SA
	Mrs S Barter (from 7.10pm until 8.55pm)	SB
	Mr D Evans (until 8.30pm)	DE
	Mrs C Hounsell	CH
	Mr R Newbery	RN
	Mrs L Patch	LP
	Mrs N Spong (until 8.40pm)	NS
	Mrs J Stiddard	JS
	Dr A Thomas (until 8.35pm)	AT
	Mr J Wilkinson	JW
	Mr R Wynn-Jones	RWJ
In Attendance:	Mrs C Bamford (Clerk)	CB
	Ms J Barber (Finance Director)	JB
	Mr P Hodgson (Corporate Director)	PH
	Mr A Ormerod (Academic Director)	AO

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Jenny Clifford, Amy Coles, Kayleigh Deverill, Paul Kendall and Ken Willcox.

Amy O'Neill not in attendance.

There were no declarations of interests.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

2. Draft Minutes of Governing Body Meeting held on 2 February 2011 for approval

CH proposed the Minutes be approved, this was seconded by RJW and unanimously agreed by the meeting.

3. Matters arising

DE raised his concerns about the lack of Student Forum so far this year and the communication he had received from Penny Routledge. He would like to raise his concerns directly with Penny Routledge. SA stated that she would arrange a meeting for herself and David to discuss the issues further with PR.

Action : SA GB3111

CD commented that we could have further feedback once the first Student Forum meeting had taken place on the 5 April 2011.

NS commented that Business Administration students are always present on Open Days and this features as part of their course.

The matter arising sheet was noted.

4. **Draft Minutes of Accommodation Committee meeting held on 2 February 2011 for information**

The Minutes were noted.

5. **Draft Minutes of Quality Committee meeting held on 15 February 2011 for information**

The Minutes were noted.

6. **Draft Minutes of Management Accounts Review Group meeting held on 10 March 2011 for information**

RWJ queried the sentence in the minutes that states 'we need to show a breakeven position to enable us to proceed with phase 3 of the building project and meet the bank's requirements'. CD confirmed that we cannot show a deficit on the College forecast for 2011-2012.

RWJ queried the College being able to demonstrate an improving forecast and asked what the Bank would do if this is not the case. CD commented that the Bank is aware that this is a sector issue and that we would continue to have detailed discussions with the Bank.

SA confirmed that the crucial date was 31 March 2011 when the YPLA will confirm allocation figures. RWJ asked how other colleges were coping, SA stated that there are many in a much worse financial position.

AT queried the use of KPMG and the cost involved in undertaking this service. SA confirmed that they will be charging the College a flat fee and then additional costs will be incurred if they find savings in excess of £70K. This process will start on the 4 April 2011.

The Minutes were noted.

7. **Draft Minutes of Academic Board meeting held on 3 March 2011 for information**

RN asked if the College had picked up any additional Horticulture students since the notification that Filton College and City of Bristol were closing their Horticulture courses. PH commented that they had actually approached the College and we were already taking and gaining more apprenticeships.

RWJ queried the difference between 'overall success' and 'timely success'. PH confirmed that this relates to apprenticeships and that the measures are slightly different. If learners don't achieve in a set time framework then the College cannot enter against the final success rate.

AO thanked CH for attending the meeting and representing the Governors.

The Minutes were noted.

MAIN AGENDA

8. Verbal report on strategic plan development for information

PH provided the meeting with a verbal update. He commented that the Senior Management Team have looked at various other colleges who generally produce two plans, the first plan as a more general strategic mission and the second a more detailed internal strategy.

The proposal going forward would be to produce a public version and an internal working plan. SMT would then propose to bring back a draft for discussion at a Governor Day session before final approval at the Board meeting.

CD commented that we are not obliged to produce for external bodies so we should spend the time getting it correct and suitable for College use.

CH queried if there was a lot of change since the Strategic Plan already in existence. PH stated there were some changes due to funding but that the current direction/vision is still applicable.

9. Future governance structure for information

CD explained that the current sub committee structure has grown up organically and that it has been some time since the purpose fulfilled by each committee has been reviewed or examined to determine whether the College overall governance structure is fit for purpose.

CD proposed that the Corporation develops a new sub committee structure to better deliver the requirements of governance and to support the activities and management of the College. CD went through the proposal as detailed in the report provided. He also explained that to support this change he was proposing to establish a monthly 'Chair and Principal' bulletin which will be circulated to all Governors, drawing attention to significant developments, achievements and issues in that month.

JW commented that he felt that the formation of a Strategic Governance Committee and boosting the membership of the original MARG Committee was a very good idea. JW felt that we need to be careful on the reporting

back from Governor observation sessions through curriculum link. CD stated that we need to define the purpose of the curriculum link meetings and to feedback, and agreed that this would need to be carried out in a sensitive manner.

RWJ asked who would attend the Strategic Governance Committee and queried why the Financial Director was not detailed on the initial membership. CD confirmed that he had only listed the Governors and would discuss who would be in attendance and bring back a proposal to the May Governor meeting.

CH queried the timescale of this change and asked whether it would be better to wait before going into detail to see what would be required by the Strategic Plan. CD commented that in an ideal world it would be good to make a straight line linkage between the Committee structure and the Strategic Plan but that he was not convinced that we would be in a position to do this now and was keen to move forward. He also noted that he would encourage 'task and finish' groups to look at particular issues raised by the Strategic Plan and report back to the Board as and when required.

CD asked members if they were happy to proceed with the recommendations and proposals as detailed in the paper, taking into account the additional SMT members required in the Strategic Governance Committee.

JW proposed the recommendations be approved, this was seconded by RN and unanimously agreed by the meeting.

10. **Principal's Report and student numbers for information**

SA took the meeting through her report explaining that it had been written three weeks ago and was therefore a little out of date, the flow of information would be more current with the move to a monthly bulletin.

SA noted that the Skills Funding Agency had forwarded an indicative allocation of money and student numbers in January which had been based on the previous year and current performance. She explained that adjustment and review to these figures will happen later in the year when a true picture of enrolment can be provided.

SA informed members that the Ofsted Inspection of Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities had gone extremely well and the Inspector had been very impressed with the students placed in Local Authority positions through 'Project Search'.

SA noted that an 'Apprenticeship Speed Dating' event had taken place on 21 March 2011 and she had been informed that this had been successful. RWJ commented that he had attended the event and was not impressed with how the City of Bath had organised it. The event started 40 minutes late,

60 students turned up who had not pre-registered for the event and several employers who were due to be there did not turn up.

RN queried if the Marketing team could follow this up and pursue employers that failed to arrive and also look at organising our own event in the future.

SA informed the meeting that she had received a financial statement from the Skills Funding Agency stating that the College Financial Health grade for 2009/2010 was Good.

PH took the meeting through the learner numbers and commentary, explaining that this showed a comparison against this time last year and not a forward projection.

He explained that since the report had been written the College had entered a further partnership provision with Weston College (as approved by the MARG committee).

PH noted that the 100/100 Campaign had already elicited potential new apprenticeships of approximately 60+ and that the College is vigorously pursuing these in negotiation with some 20 employers.

11. **Update on student retention and risks for information**

AO introduced the report and went through the areas for concern, namely Adult Learning, KBSC and HSC&EY. AO explained the reasons for these low retention rates and assured members that all Heads of Schools are working hard to retain students by offering support, extra work, visiting at home and continuing to chase up absent students.

JW asked if there is something that the partnership providers do to retain students that we can learn from. PH commented that the length of course and delivery pattern makes it easier for them to retain students. AO stated that he would discuss this further.

Action : AO GB3112

RWJ queried the high loss of students from Business and ICT. AO explained that there was not one specific reason to account for these losses.

RN asked when EMA was due to finish and the possible effect on retention. SA confirmed that EMA finishes in July and the priority would be to protect those two year students that had previously been promised this. The new intake of students will know that EMA is not in existence when they enrol.

DE left the meeting at 8.30pm.
AT left the meeting at 8.35pm.

12. Finance

i. **Financial Forecast for information**

JB went through the report and explained that it presents the Mid-Year Financial Forecast for 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 which had to be returned to the SFA by 11 March 2011.

JB referred to Appendix A and noted that column 1 shows the forecast for 2010-2011 (also included in the management accounts) and column 2 shows the forecast for 2011-2012.

JB explained that Appendix B shows the changes that have been made to move from the forecast for 2010-2011 to the forecast of 2011-2012 and that the changes had been divided into two sections. Firstly changes that have already been identified and are being implemented and secondly additional changes that were suggested at the MARG meeting in order to achieve a breakeven position; these still need to be resolved.

JB commented that Appendix C shows a forecast balance sheet as at 31 July 2011 and 31 July 2012 and that the capital project expenditure had been re-phased as detailed in the report.

JB also informed members that since the writing of the report Penny Routledge had secured an additional £70K grant from the Skills Funding Agency for additional learner support for the current year.

JB noted that the figures included for the YPLA/SFA income are based on the latest forecast provided by the Senior Manager for College Information Systems. This is the most accurate information provided at this stage but is subject to change after the number allocation provided on 31 March 2011

NS left the meeting at 8.40pm.

JW asked about partnership provision and how we could make more of these relationships. PH commented that relationships with partnership providers had increased this year in order to maintain our learner numbers but SMT are looking at how to improve our in-house mechanism for next year.

The meeting decided to take item 12iv next.

iv. **Fees Policy for 2011/2012 for approval**

LP explained to members that a couple of minor amendments were required.

Subject to these changes as discussed at the meeting RN proposed the Fees Policy be approved, this was seconded by JS and unanimously agreed by the meeting.

ii. **Management Accounts for January 2011 for information**

JB explained that the Accounts do not include the additional £70K ALS funds previously discussed.

JB noted that at present no provision has been included for the additional costs of restructuring, redundancy and strain on pension fund. She explained that these costs will vary significantly depending on the individuals involved and that quotations are currently being sought. JB commented that in her opinion it was best not to include figures at this stage due to the sensitive nature and the uncertainty of actual costs which would not be finalised until the outcome of negotiations had been concluded.

RWJ queried if we should include a figure to keep Governors informed. CD stated that this would be reviewed at the Strategic Governance Committee meeting as we do need to understand the financial implications but at the moment we are only at the initial stage of restructuring.

iii. **Top ten risks for information**

The report was noted.

13. **Accommodation**

Verbal update on capital project and rationalisation of estate for information

PH provided a verbal update. PH confirmed that the SFA had awarded the College with an additional £43,946 of capital grant money and explained that the College has to spend a further £88K by March 2012 in order to receive this funding.

PH noted that he would be meeting with Animal Care next week to discuss the move back to main site and to ensure that their needs were met.

PH commented that the College had received two offers on Ellsbridge House. Both have been rejected at this stage and PH has asked King Sturge to go back and push for an offer closer to the asking price but has also given a bottom line figure to provide some negotiating power. He noted that he would call an Accommodation Committee meeting in the next couple of weeks.

JS queried what had happened with Animal Care moving to Horseworld. SA explained that the College have pulled out of dealings with Horseworld due to expense and that Horseworld were looking for a substantive lease which was considered unaffordable.

14. **Minutes of Equality and Diversity Focus Group meeting held on 16 February 2011 for information**

The Minutes were noted.

15. **Any Other Business**

CB explained that currently all SA's Barclaycard expenditure and travel expenses have to be countersigned by the Chair. A proposal has been put forward by the Head of School for Student Corporate Services that any amount up to and including £50 would not require a signature.

This proposal was unanimously agreed by the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.25pm.

Next meeting Wednesday 25 May at 6.30pm.