

**Minutes of Norton Radstock College Governing Body meeting
held on Wednesday 25 May 2011 at 6.30pm**

Present:	Mr C Dando (Chair)	CD
	Mrs S Arayan (Principal)	SA
	Mrs S Barter (from 7.15pm)	SB
	Dr J Clifford (from 7.10pm)	JC
	Mr D Evans	DE
	Mrs C Hounsell	CH
	Mr P Kendall	PK
	Mrs J Kurton	JK
	Mr R Newbery	RN
	Mrs L Patch	LP
	Mrs J Stiddard	JS
	Mr K Willcox	KW
	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 Amy Coles, Kayleigh Deverill, Amy O'Neill and Alun Thomas.

There were no declarations of interests.

2. Appointment of Academic Staff Governor

The Chair welcomed Janice Kurton. He confirmed her appointment as the new Academic Staff Governor serving a term of office of two years.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3. Draft Minutes of Governing Body Meeting held on 23 March 2011 for approval

JW proposed the Minutes be approved, this was seconded by JS and unanimously agreed by the meeting.

4. Matters arising

The matters arising sheet was noted.

5. **Draft Minutes of Search and Nomination Committee meeting held on 29 March 2011 for information**

SA noted that she and CD had met with Professor Robert Mears as suggested by the Search Committee. They were both very impressed and confirmed that he will be joining the Governing Body and Quality Committee in October 2011.

CB noted that funding and finance training had taken place on 24 May 2011. The Governors that attended had found this extremely beneficial and were keen to have more in-house training. CH noted that she had attended the AoC South West Governor Seminar and would like to share the information with other Governors. CH to send briefing paper to Clerk.

RWJ asked about the progress of finding a Governor from a local school. SA confirmed that she had met with the head of Norton Hill who was not in a position to provide a candidate. SA will meet with the new Head of Writhlington when he takes up his position in September and will ask if they have a suitable candidate for nomination. This will be added as an item for discussion at the next Search committee meeting.

Action: CB GB5111

The Minutes were noted.

6. **Draft Minutes of Strategic Governance Committee meeting held on 6 May 2011 for information**

CD noted that RWJ would be leaving the Audit Committee due to now being a member of the Strategic Governance Committee which deals with financial issues. JK and JW stated that they would be willing to become members of the Audit Committee.

JW sought clarification as to whether the Minute regarding the sale of Ellsbridge House was sufficient for SFA approval. CD explained that due to timing and speed needed the Sub-Committee Minute had been forwarded to the SFA but it was always the intention to seek endorsement by the Corporation.

This decision made by the Sub-Committee to sell Ellsbridge house at £850,000 was unanimously endorsed by the meeting.

The Minutes were noted.

7. **Draft Minutes of Accommodation Committee meeting held on 6 May 2011 for information**

The Minutes were noted.

MAIN AGENDA

8. Verbal report from Principal and Student numbers for information

SA confirmed that she would be giving a verbal update to the meeting as she is now sending out a regular Governor news bulletin.

SA informed Governors that she would be attending a national AoC Innovation Committee meeting and would report back to Governors in the next bulletin.

It was noted that SA has become a Governor at the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases (RNHRD) and had managed to secure some work experience for students at the hospital.

SA asked Governors if they had any questions regarding the student numbers and commentary supplied.

RWJ queried the funding values for 19-24 apprenticeships and adult apprenticeships for May 2011 which seemed to be very different to those of May 2010 and did not appear to relate to student number reductions. PH confirmed that the SFA do not use learner numbers to determine funding allocations. Figures fluctuate as roll on roll off is a feature of apprenticeship and they are not tied to the academic year.

9. Update on student retention and risks for information

AO took the meeting through the report explaining that the College retention target is 90%. He noted that the whole College retention is stable at 88% but still 2% below target.

He explained that Heads of Schools are working with students to provide support to those students at risk of leaving and are monitoring attendance closely. AO informed the meeting that the Strategic Governance Committee had suggested the College investigate the possibility of employing an individual to proactively chase attendance and work with students across all courses. This option is currently being investigated and Governors will be kept up to date with progress.

JW commented that he was concerned about the retention issue listed as 'progress' as this was a very high number of students and has increased to 29 in April 2011. AO explained that students are currently sitting assessments and failing which is why the numbers have increased later in the academic year. They are on the register to highlight that they may be in danger of leaving their courses. These students will be given extra support and can retake their assessment so hopefully this retention figure will improve.

RN asked how many of the 626 students with possible retention issues had actually left the College. AO confirmed that 276 enrolments out of the 2290 starts had left the College and also confirmed that we were 1.5% above the

national average with regards to retention rate. It was noted that the figures, as presented, did not make clear that the 'total' figure was not cumulative, as each monthly incident may be the same student month on month rather than a new student.

JW queried the inclusion of partnership provision in the retention target as this was not taken in to consideration when the target was set. CD confirmed that this would be investigated further.

After discussion, it was decided that the new Data Task Group from the Strategic Governance Committee should look at the information and how it should be presented on the retention report to make it clearer for Governors to understand. CB to ensure this is included as an item on the agenda for the Data Task Group.

Action : CB GB5312

10. **Report on capital build programme for approval**

PH took the meeting through the report and provided an update on the capital build project.

PH explained the funding detail in light of the sale of Ellsbridge House and asked Governors for approval, following recommendation by the Accommodation Committee, to proceed with the Capital programme to include the total scheme, up to a budget spend of £1,225,000 .

The recommendation was unanimously approved by the meeting.

Governors discussed introducing an additional budget line for on-going refurbishments of the buildings next year and agreed this would be a good way forward.

CD noted that he wanted to thank those who have been working on site with minimum disruption to students and staff.

RN queried if the SFA had given approval for the disposal of Ellsbridge House. PH confirmed that the SFA had requested certain information which he had provided and he was now waiting for a response

11. **Finance**

JB tabled a report on the new loan covenant with Barclays Bank.

JB explained that our loan covenant is part of the agreement that was signed with Barclays when setting up our long-term loan and that for some time revised wording which is more favourable for the College and easier to monitor has been discussed. JB noted that the revised wording is far less

restrictive and that any shortfall in cashflow from operations can be covered by cash reserves.

JB asked Governors to approve the new bank covenant and authorise the Principal and Finance Director to sign the letter of variation.

The meeting thanked JB and her team for the work involved in achieving the new, less restrictive covenant.

The new bank covenant was unanimously approved by the meeting.

i. **Financial Forecast for information**

JB went through the report and explained that it presents the latest three year financial plan 2010/2011 to 2013/2014. JB asked Governors to note that at this stage of the budget process, the figures for 2011/2012 have been prepared by taking the current year and adjusting for any savings that have been identified. The forecast had been updated to reflect key changes. One of these was that the surplus on asset disposal had been reduced by £150,000 to reflect the reduced offer for Ellsbridge House. This reduction had been replaced by £150,000 loan.

The report was noted

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

JB took the meeting through the report noting that the College continues in a solvent position.

RWJ queried the restructuring costs that had been included. JB confirmed that these were actual figures for the Student Services restructuring as this was now complete. The Heads of Schools restructuring is in process so these figures will be accounted for when complete.

The report was noted

iii. **Top ten risks for information**

JB explained that the report had been reviewed by SMT and the main change was that the risk of the Local Government Pension Scheme deficit had been removed as the College is now able to pay over a period of 30 years to catch up the deficit.

A new risk of government policy changes to which social security benefits qualify for fee remission has now been added. This will affect potential students on income support and disability related benefits.

RWJ queried risk RMMT16 which states that a significant proportion of the College's provision runs with class sizes under their break-even

point. SA confirmed this is mitigated by delivery and the merging of classes. KPMG have also been asked to investigate this.

The report was noted

12. **Minutes of Health and Safety meeting held on 5 April 2011
for information**

The minutes were noted.

13. **Minutes of Student Forum meeting held on 5 April 2011
for information**

DE raised concerns about the Student Forum and didn't feel that the College was serving the students properly. JW commented that we need to be able to demonstrate to outside authorities how we listen to the student voice.

CH commented that there were a range of ways to hear the student voice and the Student Forum is only one element and we need to look at the whole picture. SA noted that she is having a monthly lunch with a range of students to listen to feedback. There were also questionnaires given to students three times a year and end of course evaluations given to the Quality committee for scrutiny.

After discussion it was decided that SA and CD should meet with PR and the Student Governors to ask them how they would like to proceed with the meeting and how they felt student's issues should be addressed.

Action : SA/CD GB5113

14. **Report on the use of the College Seal for information**

The report was noted.

15. **Any Other Business**

SA commented that a team from RUH would be visiting the College at 3.30pm on Thursday 26 March to consult on a trust status application and Governors would be welcome to attend.

JC stated that she had hosted a session for Bev Woodland and a group of Foundation students that had been very successful and which she would like to repeat.

CD thanked Julie Stiddard for her time served as a Governor and for her contribution to the Search committee.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Next meeting Wednesday 20 July at 6.30pm.