

Minutes of the Esher College Corporation
held on Tuesday 9th December 2008

* Present

* Mr Terry Price (Chair)

* Mr Keith Blackwell	* Mr David Lavarack
* Mr Michael Butlin	* Mr David Lowe
Mrs Susan Effendowicz	Mr Paul Monaghan
* Mr Pele Ling	* Mrs Robyn Ross
* Mrs Carole Ann Roycroft	* Mr Chris Johnson
* Mr Robin John	* Mrs Pam Whyman
* Dr Anne Grant	* Dr Clarissa Wilks
* Cllr Peter Hickman	* Mrs Jo Canessa
* Mr Michael Kelmsey	* Mr Jack Gregson
* Mr David Irving	

In attendance: Mrs Sue Gunter: Clerk to the Corporation
Mr Dan Dean: Deputy Principal (Advising Officer)

Part I

Terry Price welcomed Robin John to his first Corporation meeting.

1. PRESENTATION ON CHILD PROTECTION AND LEARNING SUPPORT
by Bill McClelland

Bill McClelland made a PowerPoint presentation on the above subjects, the main points of which were:-

- Child protection applies to those under 18, although the College also has a responsibility to those students who are over 18.
- It is the College's statutory duty to work with external agencies, including social services and local authorities.
- The term "child abuse" includes neglect, physical injury, emotional and sexual abuse.
- The College has an existing Child Protection Policy and is working on its policy for safeguarding children.
- He outlined three current cases on an anonymous basis to illustrate the types of high-level problems that can be experienced by students.
- He reminded governors that they had a statutory duty in this area. Clarissa Wilks, the nominated Governor with responsibility for Child Protection, advised that in her own work she was working on a child centred project using inter-professional practice and concentrating on early intervention.

In terms of Learning Support, Bill McClelland reported that there were now two teachers and five teaching assistants who worked in a variety of ways in supporting students. He provided the following statistics for 2007-08 academic year:-

- 234 students were recorded as having been supported.
- There were 3 students with English as a second language
- The College had identified 12 students with needs not previously identified.
- The College had 3 students with serious physical disabilities.
- 24 students had received in-class targeted support.
- Those targeted achieved on average 1.4 times their benchmark score.

- 100% of students who received support rated it as good/very good.

There was a wide-ranging discussion of some of the issues discussed above. It was agreed that the situation for those students still in college but over 18 was a grey area. Bill McClelland confirmed that the College still supported and guided students after they had reached the age of 18.

The issue of other lower level problems was discussed. The College had instances of pregnancies and encouraged students to continue their studies although this was difficult to achieve in practice. In response to a question about bullying, the staff felt that this was not an issue for the College and any early signs were dealt with effectively. The Student Governors present supported this view.

The question of students taking up support was discussed. Neither the staff nor the students present felt that there was any embarrassment attached to seeking support. Jo Canessa said that students were advised at Induction that support was open to all. There was an issue concerning students understanding the importance of disclosing support needs on UCAS forms, in order to get necessary help on a timely basis. The comment in the Principal's report concerning constructive criticisms given to students was discussed; there was a feeling that in general students were requiring more support than in the past, in making the transition between school and college.

Terry Price thanked Bill McClelland for his presentation, and he left the meeting at this point.

2. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

The Chair asked if anyone had any interests to declare with regard to the agenda of the meeting. None were declared.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Susan Effendowicz and Paul Monaghan.

4. CONSTITUTION

The Clerk reported that there had been a secret ballot for the post of Vice Chair and Mike Kemsley had been elected as a result of this, from 1st November 2008.

Robin John had been appointed as an External Governor from 1st November and would serve on the Audit and Remuneration Committees.

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

These were agreed and signed as a true record.

6. MATTERS ARISING

Item 1 Matters arising

National comparative figures would be included in next year's examinations report.

The Chair had written to the five "top ten" students congratulating them on their achievements.

Item 4 Constitution

The ballot for Vice Chair had been held as reported above. Robin John had been appointed as a Governor with audit skills as reported above.

Item 5 Principal's Report

Keith Blackwell advised that he did not believe that there were any particular issues arising from the increase in student numbers, although the College was busy and the issue of the estate was ongoing. In response to questions from governors, he advised that numbers applying from the independent sector had gone down slightly and that class sizes averaged below 20, with two classes of 24. There were no very small classes.

Item 10 Matters arising from staff and students

It was noted that student presentations would be made at the July and December meetings.

Item 11 Any Other Business

Extracts of student letters from the Africa Trust had been put on the College website.

The Clerk advised that two governors had requested to attend courses and these had been booked. She had asked David Lloyd to create governor portal email addresses for the two student governors and understood that this had been done.

It was agreed that the wording of the confidential resolution should be changed to reflect the fact that staff and student governors leave the meeting for Part 2 items.

7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Keith Blackwell briefly outlined the main points of his report, inviting questions from governors. He highlighted the continued difficulties experienced in Staffing and recruitment, and the proposed enhancements to be made to the staffing in the finance department. Under Staff Development he was pleased to advise that there would be another S7 workshop for support staff, and in answer to questions from governors, said that staff would be able to attend Disability Discrimination Act training if relevant. Under Examinations, he drew attention to the fact that the QCA score was fairly static but the points per entry had gone up. He confirmed that this was due to more exams per student being taken. He noted the inclusion of the College in the Good Schools Guide for work done in art & design and media. Under Enrolment he corrected the conversion figure which should read 57.7%.

Under Partnerships, he reported continuing positive links with Esher High School, and the possibility of future teacher and student council exchanges. The S7 consortium continued to thrive, with a great deal of activity at departmental level and a bid for beacon funding for training of senior managers. Since writing the report, a meeting had been arranged with Richmond Borough Council on 14th January. Under Funding, the 47 additional students this year could be consolidated partly or wholly next year should the College wish to do so. Under Machinery of Government, he mentioned the new Framework for Excellence initiative. Under Staff and Student Activities he reported that the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme was going from strength to strength and that the

“Braindead” production at the Edinburgh Fringe festival had received a four star review.

Finally, under Estates, he reported that there had been a meeting with Isabelle Wragg concerning the future plans for the estates. A plan which retained the existing sports and arts block appeared to be received favourably. However, it was possible that

the College may have to delay any plans for a year due to the number of projects in the pipeline. It was likely that the College would apply for outline planning permission at the same time as making the application in principle. There were no decisions yet to be made which needed to be approved by the Corporation.

Financial Budget Summaries 2007-08

Dan Dean briefly reviewed the cash budget summaries for 2007-08 highlighting the LSC sustainability funding of £45,000 for green computers, the hold over of £15,000 of adult education funding to the current budget, and the write back of £32,000 of statute barred debt. Overall total income was £111,000 higher than budgeted. Total expenditure was £90,000 less than budgeted, giving rise to a balance of 201,000 higher than budgeted.

Financial Budget Summaries 1st August to 30th September 2008

Dan Dean advised that there was little which could be reported on such a short time scale.

Annual Report and Financial Statements to 31st July 2008

Mike Kemsley introduced these as Chair of the Finance Committee. He confirmed that the Finance Committee had reviewed them in depth and recommended their approval by the Corporation. David Lavarack similarly advised that the Audit Committee had scrutinised the related audit reports and also recommended their approval. After a brief discussion, the Report and Financial Statements were proposed for approval by Clarissa Wilks, seconded by Robin John and approved unanimously by the meeting.

8. COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

Dan Dean introduced the College Self Assessment Report (SAR), which had been reviewed in detail at the Policy Committee meeting. He focused on the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the year, and it was agreed that the creation of a three-year development plan was a key issue for the forthcoming year and one which should be discussed in detail at Corporation level. The outcome of the previous year's QIP had already been discussed.

Dan Dean said that he had given some thought to the structure of the document following its review at the Policy Committee meeting. He felt that it would be a more manageable document if the detailed divisional plans were removed and made available separately if required. All departmental plans including support ones could be treated in this way. This was unanimously agreed and it was further proposed that the QIP should be uploaded to the LSC in this revised format.

Clarissa Wilks said that she felt that the College had an exemplary annual monitoring procedure and all who had been involved in the joint review process

agreed with this comment. Michael Butlin proposed approval of the Report. This was seconded by Carole Ann Roycroft and agreed unanimously by the meeting.

9. ADMISSIONS POLICY

Keith Blackwell said that the Admissions Policy had been subject to detailed debate at the Policy Committee meeting. Some small amendments had been made to the policy which had been circulated subsequent to the meeting and a revised version was tabled at this meeting. Small changes had been made to the timetable for practical reasons, and the term "waiting list" had been replaced with "reserve list".

There was a wide-ranging debate on how best the College should deal with non-preferential applications. Robyn Ross felt that her concerns about the effects of the first come first served approach within a very limited time scale had not been adequately reflected in the Policy Committee minutes. She felt strongly that this did not offer equal opportunities for all but favoured able and well-motivated middle class families. She would like to see a longer period to the closing date with a mechanism such as a lottery to select from the applicants at a given date. Neither Keith Blackwell nor Dan Dean were in favour of this approach at the present time. All acknowledged the importance of both widening participation and offering equal opportunities to all, and Dan Dean pointed out that Point 43 of the QIP specifically provided for assessment of College policies on equality of opportunity. There was a discussion on the various factors which influenced applications to the College. It was agreed that the College suffered a particular dilemma in this area because it was oversubscribed year on year.

No acceptable alternatives to the method outlined above could be agreed, and it was proposed that this policy should be approved, but should be subject to an annual review. On this basis, Michael Butlin proposed approval of the policy. This was seconded by Mike Kemsley and approved unanimously by the meeting.

10. STUDENT WITHDRAWALS 2007-08

Keith Blackwell outlined the main points of the paper on student withdrawals, which would be presented each year as recommended by the PFA audit in May. Although the number of withdrawals were small, governors felt that information was useful to have.

11. INDUCTION OF STUDENT GOVERNORS

Keith Blackwell advised that this policy had been reviewed at a number of levels within the College and considered by the Review & Search Committee. Pam Whyman commented that as a staff governor, she had not in fact seen the policy prior to this meeting and Keith Blackwell apologised for this oversight. She was slightly concerned that she would be acting as a mentor to the new staff governor and also to a student governor, but would see how this worked in practice. Keith Blackwell did not feel that this should be too onerous as there were other nominated advisors. The student members felt that the induction policy would be helpful. Pele Ling proposed approval of the policy. This was seconded by David Lavarack and approved unanimously by the meeting.

12. STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ON COMMITTEES

Keith Blackwell reminded governors that when a second Student Governor had been appointed earlier this year, the Corporation meeting in April had considered

which committees they should sit on. It was felt that Estates and Policy were most appropriate, and it was agreed that it might encourage attendance if they both sat on both committees but with only vote between them. Having reviewed this, it was felt that this was not constitutionally correct as each student was entitled to a vote. It was proposed therefore that one student should sit on each committee with a vote in the normal way. This was unanimously approved.

13. REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Clerk advised that the Audit, Estate, Finance, Policy and Review and Search committees had each reviewed their own Terms of Reference at their autumn meetings. Most of the suggested amendments were minor and were recorded in the minutes of these meetings. However, there were two particular proposed changes which merited attention: -

- The proposal to bring each of the committees in line in terms of the minimum number of members, proposed at six, which with a quorum of 40% would mean three people would be needed for a meeting to be quorate.
- The removal of the stipulation in the policy terms of reference that student members could not sit on this committee. This was felt to have been erroneously carried forward on the amalgamation of committees some years ago.

Both of these points were agreed. The revised Terms of Reference for these committees were proposed for approval by Chris Johnson, seconded by David Lavarack and agreed unanimously by the meeting.

14. REPORTS BACK FROM COMMITTEES

AUDIT

David Lavarack summarised the main items discussed at the Audit Committee meeting. He went through the Annual Report of the Audit Committee to the Corporation page by page and explained the recommendations made by both the internal and external auditors. All were considered to be of a minor nature and all audit reports during the year had been "clean". David Lowe raised a question about internet purchasing under the point about purchase orders, and it was agreed that this might be more economical in some areas although there would need to be procedures for appropriate authorisation.

Action: Clerk to refer this point to Geoff Bowley for consideration.

David Lavarack then introduced the Internal Audit Annual Report which summarised the work carried out by Horwath Clark Whitehill during the year. He advised that the Audit Committee had not been able to review the Financial Management and Controls Evaluation document (FMCE) due to the tight deadlines imposed by the LSC, but this would be submitted as a draft and reviewed in detail by the Audit Committee at its March meeting.

The committee had recommended to the Corporation that the current external auditors, McIntyre Hudson, should be re-appointed.

Chris Johnson proposed approval of the Annual Report of the Audit Committee and Annual Internal Audit Report. This was seconded by Clarissa Wilks and approved unanimously. The re-appointment of the Financial Statements Auditors was also unanimously approved.

ESTATES

In the absence of Paul Monaghan, Keith Blackwell reported that the Health and Safety consultant had been in to College. Geoff Bowley was dealing with the student items. It was noted that Terry Price had been at the meeting although his name did not appear on the minutes.

FINANCE

Mike Kemsley said that in considering the financial statements, the committee had spent a considerable amount of time in identifying minor typographical errors, which was not felt to be a good use of its time. He proposed to carry out a detailed proof reading of the accounts prior to the meeting next year.

The committee had identified the possible use of financing rather than cash for future fixed asset investments as an area worth exploring, and had felt that it would be beneficial to set aside part of a Corporation meeting to discuss the strategic plan.

POLICY

Terry Price did not have any items to discuss which had not already been discussed elsewhere in the meeting.

REVIEW AND SEARCH

Carole Ann Roycroft said that the committee had spent some time identifying and discussing topics for governor training and had produced a list of suggestions. Keith Blackwell felt that the Roles and Responsibilities would probably be too long for a presentation and suggested that this was covered at the Governor Inset day. He felt that the Framework for Excellence which he had alluded to in his Principal's Report, was an important area for governors to be aware of and if it was agreed that this should be the presentation for the Spring term meeting.

Action: Dan Dean to make a presentation on "Framework for Excellence" at the Spring Corporation meeting.

The committee had also discussed the use of acronyms in documentation and discussion and felt it was important to try to ensure that these were spelt out in full on first use.

15. MATTERS ARISING FROM ACADEMIC STAFF/STUDENTS

Pam Whyman felt that the students who smoked were not making use of the smoking shelter. Keith Blackwell agreed that there was still an issue of them using the roads and this needed to be addressed.

Action: Keith Blackwell to look at how to encourage students to make proper use of the smoking shelter.
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Pele Ling had circulated an update to governors on the student council activities. In addition he tabled a schedule showing charitable fundraising which had been

carried out during the year. Keith Blackwell confirmed that the Student Council had had an excellent year.

Finally, Pele Ling thanked governors for welcoming him on to the Governing Body and said that he had enjoyed his involvement with it. In turn, Terry Price thanked him and Jack Gregson for their valuable input.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Governors Attendance at College (from College records) – not discussed

19.09.08 Terry Price for meeting with Principal
25.09.08 Michael Butlin for Environmental Sustainability Group
04.11.08 David Lavarack (Sue Gunter) meeting with College Accountant
05.11.08 Clarissa Wilks – Joint Reviews
06.11.08 David Lavarack – Joint Reviews
07.11.08 Chris Johnson and Michael Butlin – Joint Reviews
13.11.08 Carole Ann Roycroft – Joint Reviews
14.11.08 Paul Monaghan and Terry Price – Joint Reviews
25.11.08 Terry Price for meeting with Principal
10.12.08 Clarissa Wilks and Pele Ling for Equality & Diversity Officer interviews

17. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 26th March 2009.