

Further Education Corporation

Approved Minutes of the Further Education Corporation

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 1 December 2008 at 6.00 pm.

Present: Dr R Gray (Vice Chairman) (in the Chair)
Mr M Baker
Mr J Bruce
Mrs S Carr
Mr Y Goolamali
Mrs J Hodges
Ms R Klass (from 6.15 pm)
Mr D O'Halloran
Ms C Piper (from 6.30 pm)
Mr M Smith
Mr P Stafford

In Attendance: Mr P Groome (Director of Resources and Planning) (Item 5)
Mr A McGarel (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)
(Items 5 & 6)
Mr J Hayles (Director of Quality Improvement) (Item 10)
Mrs S Murray (Director of HE and Operations) (Item 10)
Mr R I Millea (Clerk to the Corporation)

Mr C Burrowes of Chaplin Frobisher Welling Limited was also in attendance as an observer preparatory to him taking over the functions of Clerk from Mr Millea during Mr Millea's forthcoming absence for major surgery. Mr Millea introduced Mr Burrowes to the Board.

In the absence of the Chairman, Dr R Gray (Vice Chairman) took the Chair.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Pickford (Chairman) and Professor Nigel South (Observer – University of Essex).

Mr S Buggle and Mr R Lane were not present.

2. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

A member raised the issue of the size of the agenda and the volume of papers circulated to members. This was agreed to feature for discussion at the next Board Development Day in June 2009.

3. **Minutes of the Meeting of Monday 6 October 2008**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 6 October 2008 were **APPROVED** and **SIGNED** by the Chairman, subject to one amendment to the Confidential minute.

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes (Paper FEC.08.36)**

The Principal and Chief Executive gave a verbal update on an Academy Proposal in Thurrock.

The Board determined that this matter be treated as a Confidential Item under the Instrument and Articles. A separate minute has been prepared and is attached to these minutes.

5. **Strategic Developments in South Essex (Paper FEC 08.37)**

The Principal and Chief Executive provided updates in connection with the following matters:

- The proposed merger with Thurrock & Basildon College
- Progress on the Thurrock Learning Campus, Thurrock Campus – Phase 1, the Thurrock permanent Campus and the Farringdon Road Development
- The LSC Competitions

All of these items were deemed to be confidential matters under the Instrument & Articles and separate minutes have accordingly been prepared, which are attached to these minutes. The Board noted that certain general aspects of the capital projects (bullet point 2 above) are in the public domain but the detail is not. They requested that future reports to the Board and its committees distinguish between what is of a confidential nature and what is not so that, if asked, they are in a position to report on aspects which are of public interest without compromising the detailed progress and negotiations involved.

The Board then

- **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the Merger Update Report
- **DISCUSSED** the reports from the College's property advisers, GVA Grimley, on the Thurrock Learning Campus Phase 1, the Thurrock permanent Campus and the Farringdon Road Development
- **NOTED** the LSC Competitions verbal update report and requested that this be a written report at future meetings.

6. **Financial Statements – Year Ended 31 July 2008 (Paper FEC 08.38)**

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services presented the report and financial statements for the College for the year ended 31 July 2008 (incorporating the results of the College's subsidiary company, South East Essex Commercial Services Limited and the Regularity Audit Opinion), noting that these documents had already been considered in detail by both the Policy & Resources Committee and the Audit Committee.

Both of these committees recommended to the Board that the report and financial statements for both entities be approved.

He also presented separately the report and financial statements for the subsidiary Company, together with a representation letter covering both the College and the College Company.

The Financial Statements Audit Management Letter was also tabled.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services gave a brief resume (via a PowerPoint presentation – copy attached to these minutes) of the major highlights in the accounts for last year and reported that the external audit had gone well with the auditors raising no significant issues. The auditors have confirmed that they will sign an unqualified opinion on the accounts for both the College and College Company, as well as the regularity audit opinion.

The Board then:

- (a) **APPROVED** the financial statements for the College for the year ended 31 July 2008 and the letter of representation including the College and the subsidiary Company for submission to the financial statements auditor.
- (b) **NOTED** the contents of the financial statements auditor's Audit Management Letter.
- (c) **APPROVED** the financial statements for South East Essex Commercial Services Limited for the year ended 31 July 2008.

It was noted that the accounts would be signed by the Chairman and The Principal and Chief Executive in due course so as to meet the submission deadline to the LSC of 31 December. It was further noted that this meeting constitutes the Annual General Meeting of the College Company and was held to comply with the law, short notice having been given and agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 7.35 pm for seasonal refreshments.

The meeting reconvened at 7.45pm.

7. Risk Management Annual Report 2007-08 (Paper FEC.08.39)

The Board received and **APPROVED** the Risk Management Annual Report for 2007-08, as recommended by the Audit Committee.

8. Review of Confidential Papers (Paper FEC.08.40)

The Board **APPROVED** the Review of Confidential Papers of the Board presented by the Clerk, following his annual review.

The reasons for the confidential designation of various minutes are included in a Confidential Minute, attached to these minutes.

9. Audit Matters (Paper FEC.08.41)

The Board **APPROVED**:

- (a) the Final Annual Report of the Audit Committee including the Terms of Reference for 2007-08

(b) revised College Financial Regulations

Item (a) was considered by the Audit Committee on 7 November 2008 and item (b) on 9 September 2008 and are recommended by the Audit Committee to the full Board for approval.

10. Quality Matters (Paper FEC.08.42)

The Director of Quality Improvement and the Director of HE and Operations presented the following items for consideration by the Board.

10.1 Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER)

The Board **RECEIVED** and **DISCUSSED** the IQER feedback report on the HE inspection, which took place on 5/6 November 2008. The inspectors identified strengths for each line of enquiry, of which there were three, and good practice, worthy of dissemination within and/or beyond the College, for each core theme. There were some desirable recommendations (relatively low level) which will be actioned in the future.

10.2 College Self-Assessment Report 2007-08

The Board received a draft copy of the SAR Report for LSC FE funded courses, accompanied by comments from the Director of Quality Improvement in the form of a PowerPoint presentation summarising the report and illustrating progress to date with preparation of the document. Copies of the slides are attached to these minutes.

John explained the process by which the SAR is compiled and the timetable involved. The final report will be placed on the LSC Provider Quality Gateway in December.

Overall, the College grades itself as grade 2 for overall effectiveness. With regard to the Every Child Matters agenda, the judgement is outstanding grade 1.

He reported on the key strengths of the College and the key areas for improvement, which are noted in the copies of the slides. He also noted the outstanding features of the College, which are reflected in the SAR.

The Board noted that there remains work to be done to close the gap in achievement between BME and white students and information about the actions being taken in this regard will be disseminated to the Board shortly.

The Board **RECEIVED** and **DISCUSSED** the report on progress with preparation of the SAR Report 2007-08. The report was **APPROVED** in principle.

10.3 Analysis of Complaints 2007-08

The Board **NOTED** the Analysis of Complaints for last year and the action plan proposed for 2008-09, arising from the analysis, which is included in the paper presented. Members enquired as to how significant the raw number of complaints actually were in the context of the whole business.

10.4 Learner Enrolment Report

The Director of Quality Improvement tabled a report on Learner Enrolments based on headcount data for applications and enrolments on long qualifications between 1 August and 1 November. Short course enrolments are not included.

The Board were informed and expressed some concern about the disappointing HE recruitment this year and asked to be informed at the next meeting as to actions being taken to try and improve enrolment of these students.

The Board **NOTED** the report.

11. LSC Matters (Paper FEC.08.43)

The Board **NOTED** the receipt of a recent document from the National LSC – the LSC Annual Statement of Priorities 2009-10 – which incorporates within it the LSC Grant Letter 2009-10.

The Board also **NOTED** the receipt of the LSC Final Contract 2008-09 with the College (received over three months after the year began) and the LSC Financial Memorandum with the College for this year, together with a response letter from the College to the LSC regarding two areas of query, regarding additional learning support and Train to Gain.

The Principal and Chief Executive referred to the Annual Statement of Priorities to inform the Board of the challenges which the LSC faces in delivering the Government's agenda and the resultant impact of these challenges on Colleges.

Members also received a copy of the recently published Thames Gateway Skills framework.

12. Principal and Chief Executive's Report (Paper FEC.08.44)

The Board **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the contents of the Principal and Chief Executive's Report.

13. Partnership for HE in South Essex (Paper FEC.08.45)

The Board **NOTED** the report on the work of the Management Board of the Partnership for Higher Education in South Essex and continuing development of HE provision in Southend.

14. Safeguarding Children in Education (Paper FEC.08.46)

The Board **RECEIVED** the Review of Child Protection Issues 2007-08.

15. Corporation Matters (Paper FEC.08.47)

The Board **RECEIVED** a report of the outcomes of the Board Development Day held on 17 November 2008, which incorporated the Annual Governance Self-Assessment, carried out by the Board. The Board graded its own performance as grade 1 – Outstanding, which has been incorporated in the overall College SAR.

16. Membership Matters (Paper FEC.08.48)

Following the annual review of Committee Memberships carried out by the Search Committee and documented in the report of their business at item 17 below, the Board **APPROVED** the following motion:

MOTION

That the Current Committee Memberships be confirmed for the next twelve months save that Mr Steve Buggle ceases forthwith to be a member of the Policy & Resources Committee and the Remuneration Committee and that Michael Baker be appointed as a member of the Remuneration Committee with immediate effect.

17. Reports from Corporation Committees (Paper FEC.08.49)

The Board **RECEIVED** reports on the business of the Policy and Resources Committee, the Audit Committee, the Search Committee and the Academic Board in connection with meetings of those committees held since the last meeting of the Corporation.

18. Forthcoming Events (Paper FEC.08.50)

The Board **NOTED** the events listed in the paper.

19. Dates of Next Meetings

In connection with the proposed merger, it is envisaged that a Special Meeting may be necessary on Monday 23 February 2009, prior to the Policy & Resources Committee meeting scheduled on that date.

The following regular meetings of the Board will be held on Monday 23 March 2009 and Monday 6 July 2009.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 9.00 pm.