

Policy & Resources Committee

Approved Minutes

Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 September 2008

Present: Mr P Pickford (Chairman)
Mr M Baker
Dr R Gray
Mrs J Hodges
Mr M Smith

In Attendance: Mr J Hayles (Director of Quality Improvement) (Item 9)
Mr A McGarel (Director of Finance and Corporate Services) (Items 7 and 8)
Mr P Groome (Director of Resources and Planning) (Item 8)
Mr Z Monkton (Project Director, Thurrock) (Item 8)
Mrs S Murray (Director of HE and Operations) (Item 9)
Mr R I Millea (Clerk to the Corporation)

The Clerk took the Chair for the first two items on the agenda.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Ms C Piper and Mr J Bruce.

Mr S Buggle was absent.

2. **Election of Chairman**

Mr Peter Pickford was unanimously re-elected Chairman of the Committee for the academic year 2008-09.

Mr Pickford resumed the Chair.

3. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

4. **Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 2 June 2008**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 June 2008 were **APPROVED** and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

5. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising, not otherwise included on the agenda.

6. Strategic Developments in South Essex (Paper PRC.08.19)

- (a) The Principal and Chief Executive provided the Committee with an update of recent developments in connection with the proposed merger with Thurrock & Basildon College and this was deemed to be a confidential matter under the Instrument & Articles and a separate minute has been prepared in connection with this issue, which is attached to these minutes.
- (b) The Committee received a copy of a recent LSC publication entitled FEC Models for Success, which addresses, amongst other things, merger issues.
- (c) The Principal and Chief Executive provided an update on the LSC Competitions.

7. College Finances (Paper PRC.08.20)

7.1 College Finances to the end of June 2008

For the year to date, College income totalled £33,078,000 and expenditure totalled £31,957,000, giving a surplus to date of £1,121,000, against a budgeted surplus of £761,000, an improvement of £360,000 (47.3%).

7.2 Provisional Outturn for the Year Ending 31 July 2008

The forecast outturn prepared in March 2008 indicated a surplus of £1,168,000 against a budgeted surplus of £987,000 (before exceptional items) and slightly higher than the June YTD position.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services provided a verbal update as to the final expected outturn for the year, subject to audit, final internal verification and any adjustments required by FRS17 in respect of pension costs and liabilities, and this indicated a surplus in the order of the forecast indicated above. FRS17 adjustment figures have been received today and indicate a charge against the income & expenditure account of about £500,000 for 2007-08 which will therefore produce a final surplus of around £650,000.

Key points made by Anthony included:

- Additional funding from the LSC for the College's FE provision
- Increased project income
- Clawback of work based learning income by the LSC of £250,000
- Cash at 31 July amounted to £6.4 million
- Net assets totalled £46.7 million at 30 June 2008 (£212K better than budget)
- The College's Framework for Excellence financial health score for the College is 340 points, which equates to Grade 1 – Outstanding

The audit is due to commence at the end of September and, in accordance with normal practice, it is intended that audited accounts will be brought to the next meeting of this Committee on 3 November 2008.

7.3 Investments Report – July 2008

The Committee **NOTED** the investments position for the end of July, which showed that interest of £70,000 was earned during June and July 2008, giving a total interest earned for the year to 31 July of £327,000.

7.4 DfES (now DCSF) Learner Support Funds 2007-08

The Committee **RECEIVED** an analysis of the utilisation of £229,465 received via the LSC for distribution to students on full and part time FE courses as learner support, principally for financial hardship and childcare.

7.5 College Budget 2008-09

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services reported that the Draft Budget approved by the Corporation at its July meeting has been adopted throughout the College. Further additional and relevant financial information has not been received from the LSC which would enable the budget to be firmed up.

It is still hoped that such information will be received so that the full Corporation can formally approve a final Budget at their meeting on 6 October 2008. Any adjustments to individual budget allocations from the approved draft will be made then.

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** its support to this approach.

7.6 Bank Mandates

The Committee **AGREED** amended bank mandates following the retirement of Nigel Davis. He is removed as a cheque signatory and is replaced by John Hayles, Director of Quality Improvement.

7.7 High Interest Deposit Accounts

Following a presentation and recommendation from the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, the Committee **APPROVED** the move of deposit accounts from NatWest Bank to the Anglo Irish Bank, who are offering a higher return (by 0.30%) and have consistently paid a higher return over Nat West during the last twelve months.

Members asked if the cash reserves were high for the size of the College but Anthony indicated that it was not greatly more than three months payroll and there was an acknowledgement that resources will be required shortly for further capital developments.

8. Estates Matters (Paper PRC.08.21)

The Committee **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the report from the Director of Resources and Planning, supported by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and the Project Director, Thurrock in connection with the Interim Build Thurrock and the proposed new builds in Thurrock and Southend.

The Clerk noted that the draft programme for the November Board Development Day includes a tour of new Team Rooms which have been developed over the summer and there will be an opportunity to meet the new Heads of Faculty following the reorganisation of the curriculum management in the College.

Paul reported in detail on all the activities, supported by the attached slide presentation, which have taken place over the summer to improve the facilities for students at the Luker Road campus and also in the refurbishment of Maitland House, which is being used primarily for IT provision and by Enterprise and Service Industries students.

Zak Monkton then reported in detail on the interim and new builds in Thurrock consequent upon the winning of the LSC Competitions and on possible development of the Farringdon car park site in Southend opposite the Luker Road campus. This was supported by a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

In connection with the interim build Thurrock, full detailed consent was granted by Thurrock Development Corporation on 4 August 2008. All conditions relating to this consent have now been met, including archaeological investigations. A contract for construction has been agreed in draft and it is intended to complete all internal work by 16 January 2009 with teaching beginning three days later. GVA Grimley act as our agents for the project. Costs are 4% higher than budget (the figure included in the LSC application) but this is within the LSC tolerance of 5%. There is a reasonable hope that this variance will be funded by the LSC.

In connection with the permanent (or new) build Thurrock, the key appointments have been made for the design process. Tasks are now being proceeded (including finalising funding streams and completion of the Stage C design) with a view to making an Application in Principle to the LSC in November 2008.

In respect of the possible development of the Farringdon site, the key appointments have been made for the design process. Zak then summarised the site issues which now have to be addressed before any development proposal can be formulated. He stressed that this is a very sensitive development as there are three key players involved and he undertook to report back as things develop. Meanwhile, he shared with the Committee some possible options for the new construction on the site.

The Estates team were thanked for their comprehensive presentation on on-going estates issues, including proposed future capital developments.

9. Quality Matters (Paper PRC.08.22)

The Director of Quality Improvement presented a report covering a number of quality issues.

9.1 NOVA and Train to Gain Consortia Inspection

The Committee **NOTED** that there is to be an inspection of the College's provision in these areas from 15 to 23 September.

John Hayles indicated that nine curriculum areas will be covered plus leadership and management and does not cover HE or FE – it is entirely focused on work based learning.

9.2 Initial Learner Performance 2007-08

John reported on the preliminary learner results as they are currently known, through a short PowerPoint presentation. The results for A and AS levels are fairly final but there is still information to come in respect of vocational qualifications. However, the overall picture is not expected to change materially. Further details will be reported to the Corporation meeting on 6 October 2008.

Highlights included:

- 99% pass rate for A levels – same as last year – 347 entrants. The national average was 97.2%. High grades (A and B) increased from 32% to 37%
- AS pass rate increased from 81% to 87% - most pleasing – although the high grade rate declined from 19.1% to 15.8% (764 entries, up about 20% over last year)
- National Diplomas achieved a pass rate of 97% (last year 99%) following resolution of queries
- 147 ND students achieved triple distinction which is the equivalent of 3 A grades at A level, significantly higher than last year (almost double)
- 58% of ND students achieved high grades (MMM or above) which represents a 7% increase on last year.
- HE position is not finalised but pass rates appear at least as good as last year with a higher percentage of First Class and 2.1 degrees. There are 13 First class honours degrees and 112 First and Upper Second class honours degrees
- Level 1 and 2 Qualifications – First Diplomas 90% (last year 97%), First Certificate 92% (93%) and Introductory Diploma 92% (98%)

As retention appears to have improved, then the likelihood is that success rates this year will be higher than last year, but this will be confirmed when all results are in and all queries settled and the data analysed in the next few weeks.

The full Board will receive updated information at its meeting on 6 October 2008.

9.3 Initial Teacher Training OfSTED Inspection

The Committee received a report on the above inspection which took place during 2007/08 – this provision is delivered on behalf of the University of Essex. OfSTED have advised the University that it has awarded Grade 2: Good for the Partnership provision (Colchester Institute is also a partner in providing ITT). This is an excellent achievement for a partnership in its first year of operation (began September 2007) with newly validated programmes and with many strengths being identified by the inspection team.

The final report by OfSTED will be published in the Autumn. This is an excellent outcome, especially for a new programme, with many strengths being identified by the inspection team.

The Committee **NOTED** the outcome of the Initial Teacher Training OfSTED Inspection.

9.4 IQER Inspection of HE Provision

The Committee **RECEIVED** an update report on the progress in connection with the above inspection known as an Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review, which is taking place in two stages during 2008-09 and 2009-10. Sue Murray explained the process in detail for the Committee.

10. Management Matters (Paper PRC.08.23)

The Committee **RECEIVED** revised Management Structure Diagrams detailing the Academic and Functional Management Arrangements in the College, following the change to the Faculty model and some changes to the responsibilities of Directors.

11. Forthcoming Events (Paper PRC.08.24)

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

Inter alia, the Committee **APPROVED** the draft programme for the Board Development Day to be held on Monday 17 November 2008.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 3 November 2008 at 6.00 pm.

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