

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation
held on Thursday 14th September 2017 at 8.00am
in the Boardroom of Matthew Boulton Campus**

Present:	Apologies:
Steve Hollis (Chair)	Joel Blake (JB)
Michele Larmour (ML)	Veronica Docherty (VD)
	Keith Horton (KH)
Andrew Cleaves (Principal)	Amardeep Gill (AG)
Simon Thompson (ST)	
Hilary Smyth-Allen (HSA)	
Dan Zastawny (DZ)	
Jane Smith (JS) (Staff Governor)	
Sonia Crook-Lake (SCL) (Staff Governor)	
Mohammed Al-bukair (MA) (student governor)	
In Attendance:	
Louise Jones (LJ)	
Liam Nevin – (LN)	
Simon Cosson (SC)	
Tony Dennant (item 2 (ii) only)	

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Joel Blake, Veronica Docherty, Keith Horton and Amardeep Gill

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

Item 1 – Actions Arising from the Last Meeting

(i) Open and Confidential Minutes of meeting held on 20 July 2017

These were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

(ii) Matters Arising and Action Log

LJ summarised the paper appended to the log which dealt with the character of each College and also how each contributed to the strategic objectives of the College.

SH asked if the Heads of College knew their own particular characteristics and LJ confirmed that this was the case and that the Heads of College were driving this. JS agreed with this analysis.

LJ then provided a verbal update on the measures of unmissable lessons which encompassed observations, coaching, staff dashboards and feedback through the student council.

Finally LJ explained the apparent discrepancy in the numbers of respondents to the Big Teaching and Learning Survey reported to the May and July Corporation meetings. This had arisen because whilst there were six thousand student respondents, there were ten thousand

responses because each student could respond in respect of each course that they were taking.

Item 2 – Teaching and Learning

(i) Overview of Academic Results 16/17

LJ summarised the report and reminded the Corporation that the report focussed on “A” “A/S” and GCSE results. The results for the College overall would be available at the end of October as achievement evidence was still being collected during September and October.

In summary, whilst the College had forecast a decline in achievements for A levels because of the new specifications introduced, there had in fact been a modest improvement in achievement compared to 2015/16. This result was positive and well above forecast, but was still below the national rate. With respect to A/S levels, there had been approximately a 5% improvement, but this was considerably below forecast and the national rate.

As a consequence of these results the Executive had needed to make a prompt assessment of the viability of provision at Matthew Boulton College and it was clear that there were insufficient student numbers to make “A” level provision at the College viable. The courses had therefore been consolidated into the provision at Stourbridge and Sutton with students being offered the choice of either and with transport also being provided. The majority of students had accepted this offer.

LJ then summarised the position in respect of GCSE results and advised the Corporation that the principal measure was achievement in the high grades of 9-4. In this respect, achievement in English was 33% for 16-18 year olds, which was above the national rate, and for adults the achievement rate had improved by approximately 10% to 38%.

In respect of Maths there had been a slight increase in the 16-18 achievement rate but a slight decrease in the adult achievement rate.

SH asked what LJ thought the FE Commissioner’s view of the results would be. LJ summarised that the evidence demonstrated that the work being done to improve Maths and English was effective but that the limited improvement in “A” level results was not sufficient and this needed a renewed focus.

SH asked LJ to summarise the impact of the Head of Faculty for English and Maths in respect of the provision and results and LJ advised that she had streamlined specifications and exam boards, so that all lecturers were now teaching the same programme and were sharing best practice on a consistent basis. In addition she was working closely with management teams across the College to ensure that English and Maths was a key focus for all areas of delivery and not simply English and Maths teachers.

ST stated that the English results were very pleasing and asked whether the techniques use could be adopted across the College to drive improvement. LJ agreed that the College needed to create a critical mass of best practice by drawing on this success.

ML noted that there remained a number of areas where the College was below the national rate and where its own forecasts had proven inconsistent, and asked LJ how close she was to assessing where the College was in its improvement journey.

LJ stated that the College had historically been poor at forecasting and whilst this was improving she acknowledged that it remained inconsistent. The GCSE’s had been challenging to forecast this year as it was a new qualification with no exam papers to assess how examiners had marked.

The Principal concluded that although “A” levels were a small proportion of the College’s provision they were nevertheless important and it was proposed to use part of the Strategy Day in October to examine future options with the governors.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted.**

(ii) Overview of Academic Results – Harborne Academy

TD introduced this item and stated that the report before governors contained the results data as of the 7th September but this was subject to adjustment as results data was finalised. The changes since last week improved the results still further and the current assessment was that the Academy was likely to have a positive Progress 8 score of 0.14.

SH noted that the Ofsted letter to the Head Teacher was extremely positive and asked TD what learning points had been taken from the rapid progress of the Academy.

TD advised that the Head Teacher was totally focussed on teaching and learning and behavioural management and there was rigorous scrutiny of progress. A number of initiatives that had improved behaviour were simple measures that were easily understood.

SH asked whether TD observed the same momentum at the College and TD stated that the scale of the College was far bigger but he believed that the Pivotal strategies being implemented by the College were similar.

SH concluded by asking TD to arrange for the Head Teacher to address the Corporation and provide a short summary of the key drivers of change that had been used so effectively by the Academy. On behalf of the Corporation SH relayed its congratulations and gratitude to the Head Teacher and the staff at Harborne Academy.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted.**

(iii) Enrolment 17/18

SC introduced the report and advised the Corporation that the enrolments recorded as of the 13th September for 16-18 students was 6,893. He was confident that the College would achieve its target including in-year recruitment on Princes Trust programmes. Enrolment was being actively managed with daily reviews and prompt follow up of prospective students. The College was outperforming enrolment against the same point in time in 2016 for both 16-18 and adult students.

The Principal explained that the College had a target of 6,800 16-18 students who remained with the College beyond enrolment, there being a rate of attrition of students who dropped out early in the course and were not therefore funded. In response to a question from ML he confirmed that the final figure would be known by the Strategy Day in October.

ST asked how the College measured the effectiveness of advertising so that it knew what had persuaded the students to choose the College. The Principal confirmed that this was assessed as part of the induction survey and that his view of this year’s campaign was that marketing and follow up with prospective students were both much improved.

MA stated that there was a good atmosphere in the College with students responding well to the “Ready, Respectful, Safe” rules.

ML noted that enrolment as a percentage of target was considerably lower at James Watt than other Colleges and asked whether the reason for this was clear. LJ stated that this College recruited a smaller cohort and it was predominantly focussed on vocational provision. Traditionally many of these students enrol later but she could not be certain that this accounted for the current under- recruitment and the Head of College was working hard at targeting the residential areas close to the College.

SH queried the position with recruitment to apprenticeships and LJ confirmed that this remained vibrant with a substantial pipeline.

SH stated that the Council were developing an idea for a social capital fund from new developments that would be used to fund education and training for the long term unemployed. He asked that the Executive explore further how the College might support the delivery of such a scheme.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted.**

(iv) Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP)

LJ advised that the progress report identified one area that was RAG rated as “red” and this was learners progress at level 3 which reflected the progress with A and AS levels as reported earlier in the agenda. Since the production of the report there had been significant progress with Markbook set up and induction and target setting were both progressing well. There was also now a much clearer picture on the rate of progression and taken together, these areas of progress would move the RAG rating to “amber” by the end of the month.

A number of themes were now RAG rated “green” reflecting confidence that the impact of these changes was being demonstrated across the College.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted**

Item 3 – Finance

(i) Performance Report

SC advised that the report dealt with the outturn for the 2016-17 academic year, and confirmed that of the 20 measures, 7 had been graded green and fully achieved, eight were amber and five were red as not having been achieved. In relation to the latter category the Corporation were advised of the following;

- The shortfall against core income had been mitigated by a reduction in staffing levels.
- Improvements in induction and the classroom experience through unmissable lessons was expected to improve retention over the next academic year
- Consistent attendance rates had improved with an overall variance of 7.3% compared to 8.7% in 2015/16.

- Staff turnover was 9.2% but there was no significant turnover in any one department and no underlying cause for concern.
- Areas of improvement included attendance which was up by 2%, a significant increase in apprenticeship rates, and a 4% improvement in student satisfaction.

SH asked for an update on the relationship with the trade unions and LJ advised that this had been difficult during the recent redundancy consultation but over the course of the last month both parties had been focussed on working co-operatively to the benefit of learners.

SH stated that the College needed to focus on any relationship that could hinder the College's improvement journey and that at the strategy day he wanted to assess how to ensure strong relationships with the trade unions and other key stakeholders.

JS asked whether there had been any analysis of the breakdown in turnover between support and teaching staff since disruption to teaching arrangements was likely to have an adverse effect on learners. SC agreed to review the figures and provide feedback on this concern.

Although the figure did not appear unduly alarming, ST suggested that it would be appropriate to remove redundancies from the turnover statistics to identify the natural level of attrition.

ML asked whether the statistics on stress related absence indicated particular concerns with the direction of travel.

SC stated that the figures were not as low as the College would like but did not demonstrate any underlying concerns. The Principal added that the number of cases per month had fallen during the latter half of the year.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted.**

(ii) Management Accounts

This item is recorded in a confidential minute.

(iii) Property Disposals

This item is recorded in a confidential minute

(iv) Bad Debt Write Off

SC advised the Corporation that there was £223k of bad debts identified in the schedule to the report that had been identified for write off. All reasonable efforts to recover these sums had been exhausted including through an independent debt recovery agent. In addition, the bulk of these debts related to students who had ceased to attend a course and the Student Loan Company had terminated its financial support. In respect of these cases the College had recently changed its Fees Policy so that these debts were no longer pursued.

JS suggested that the College should retain a record of those businesses who were bad debtors for future reference, when ordering goods or services.

SC then advised that there was one debt that the Corporation had to give permission to write off and he explained that this related to a historic claim against Clegg Construction for alleged damage cause during the refurbishment of Stourbridge College. The College was not satisfied that it could evidence through its audit trail that the company were responsible for this damage and therefore it was advisable to not pursue this debt further.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the Corporation note the intention to write off the bad debts appended as Annex to the report.**
- **That the Corporation approve the writing off of a 19k invoice in respect of Clegg Construction.**

(v) Financial Health Assessment- ESFA

SC advised that following submission of the 2015-16 financial statements, the ESFA had confirmed that the College's financial health remained inadequate and that this would remain so whilst it was in receipt of a government loan.

SH observed that the letter was a good illustration of the need to pay off the government debt and focus solely on teaching and learning.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted**

Item 4 – Governance

(i) Planning for the Strategy Day

LN set out a draft agenda for the forthcoming strategy day that incorporated sessions on teaching and learning, culture change, strategy and structure and board development. It was noted that the agenda was a full one and there was little scope for delay or slippage within the allotted times.

SH stated that it was crucial that governors used the day to assess progress towards a "good" Ofsted outcome and that the agenda needed to provide assurance and generate debate and challenge around this central objective.

ML stated that the Corporation would need to consider what outcomes would be expected from the day and how it would use those anticipated outcomes as the basis to review and challenge the extent of progress over the course of the academic year.

SH observed that in focussing on progress towards "good" the Executive and Corporation also needed to reflect on key stakeholder relationships and examine the steps needed to ensure that these facilitated the required progress.

The Principal suggested that the agenda focus on teaching and learning, and culture change leading into a review of strategy and it was agreed that the agenda be re-focussed around these issues.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the agenda for the Strategy Day be focussed on the matters identified in the preamble to this minute.**

(ii) Appointments to Committees and Other Positions

- LN introduced this report and advised that following retirements and new appointments it was necessary to make some changes to committee membership and other formal governor roles. He confirmed that he had spoken to the governors concerned all of whom had kindly agreed to take on the roles proposed.

In addition to the roles identified in the supporting paper the Corporation also needed to agree a link governor for the purpose of whistleblowing. ML agreed to undertake this role.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- That the committee membership as appended to the report be approved
- That Keith Horton be appointed as vice-chair of the Corporation
- That Joel Blake be appointed as the link governor for equality
- That Michele Larmour be appointed as the link governor for whistleblowing

(iii) Matthew Boulton College Cladding Assessment

LN advised the Corporation that following the Grenfell Fire tragedy it had appointed independent fire safety engineers to review the safety of Matthew Boulton College in light of the external cladding. The report was before governors and confirmed that the College had adequate fire safety measures in place.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED


- That the report be noted

Any Other Business

SH stated that the role of the Combined Authority and the devolution agenda was of growing importance to the College and he was keen to arrange for the Mayor of the Combined Authority to address the Corporation.

The Principal agreed to make contact with the new leader of Birmingham City Council.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 19 October 2017 – Strategy Day 9.00 am – 5.00pm

Signed..... 

Chairman

Date..... 