

**Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on Monday 28 March 2011 at 6.00pm at
the North Suffolk Skills Centre, Halesworth**

Members Present:

Ken Applegate : Governor
Stephen Archer : Governor
Bob Blizzard : Governor
Alan Debenham : Governor
Evelyn Hicks : Governor
Kevin Howes : Governor
Alastair King : Governor
Bob Mee : Chair/Governor
Emily Page : Student Governor
Richard Perkins : Vice-Chair/Governor
Sarah Smith : Staff Governor
Simon Summers : Principal
Anne Swietlik : Vice-Chair/Governor

In Attendance:

Phillip Belden : Vice-Principal
Teresa Miller : Vice-Principal
Ruth Harrison : Assistant Principal
Jason King : Assistant Principal
Julie Roper : Director of Finance
Charles Reynolds: Clerk to the Corporation

Before the meeting there was an opportunity for governors to tour the Skills Centre. This was followed by a short presentation on delivery from the Centre which was given by Maxine Bye, Director 14-19.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Emma Beese, Peter Garrod, Deanna Law.

1) Disclosures of Interest

The Clerk advised that the Chair had determined, at the Principal's request, to defer agenda item 16 to the next Corporation Meeting, 23 May 2011. To this end there were no disclosures of interest known to the Clerk.

2) Corporation Membership – resignations and appointments

The Clerk reminded governors that it was Corporation policy to ensure that Student Governors were not overloaded to the detriment of their course performance. Both Student Governors were about to enter very busy phases on their courses which could impact on their attendance. In any event both would be leaving College on completion of their courses and to this end the Student Forum had been asked to start the process of seeking nominations for replacement governors.

Part 1a Open items for noting and action.

3) Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 24 January 2011 were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

4) Matters Arising from the Minutes and not Agenda Items**4.1) Strategic Planning Monitoring Report (previous agenda item 6)**

The Clerk confirmed that a presentation on Apprenticeships would be given prior to the start of the May Corporation meeting.

4.2) College Vision (previous agenda item 10)

The Clerk confirmed the College Vision had been changed as agreed.

5) Correspondence

5.1) Lowestoft College Financial Statements 2009/2010 from the Skills Funding Agency

5.2) Industrial Action Ballot Result – two letters from the University and College Union. The Principal advised there could be a third issue re IfL Membership.

Part 1b Open items: for discussion and action.

6) Finance Report – Management Accounts to 31 January 2011 and 6 Month Review

Presented jointly by Julie Roper and Teresa Miller. Richard Perkins advised that both issues had been subject to thorough review by the Estates and Finance Committee.

Before making the presentation Julie Roper reminded governors that it was normal practice to carry out a mid-year review at this time. The SFA had also required a financial update.

Firstly members were taken through the detail of the Management Accounts with specific reference to the executive summary which detailed the key variances. With reference to the variance on Tuition Fees and charges Bob Blizzard sought clarification on the situation regarding the Border Agency. Responding the Principal advised the College had planned for 3 intakes of 20 Officer of the Watch delegates. However, because of Border Agency control issues and requirements to have a required level of English, only 11 delegates had arrived in January. Every effort was being made to recruit for May but it was most unlikely that the income gap created would be closed.

Richard Perkins added that the situation was volatile although there had been some relaxation of the rules. The College did however have “highly favoured status” and efforts were also being made to find new agents to help with recruitment.

Turning to the issue of the revised outturn, which was supported by a separate paper, Julie Roper advised that significant time and effort had been put in by SMT and all managers in reviewing activity and assisting in the production of the revised budget and outturn.

Again members were taken through the detailed meeting paper which clearly sets out the key changes and reasons behind them.

Responding to the presentation Anne Swietlik observed that the College seemed to be doing well especially in controlling “internal” costs and income. However this was not so with regards to “externally” controlled areas of activity such as Employer Responsive funding. This she believed was the case with many colleges. Picking up on this point Teresa Miller advised that the College team responsible for this area of work were working very hard and had recently secured an additional 20 apprenticeships.

With reference to the first page of the Principal’s Statement Ken Applegate queried why the shared services box had a “No” response. Teresa Miller advised that this response reflected the current situation but that the opportunity for having shared services was being kept open.

Having thoroughly reviewed both the Management Accounts and the revised outturn, and in the recognition that the Estates and Finance Committee had also thoroughly reviewed both, it was firstly proposed by Richard Perkins and seconded by Anne Swietlik that Corporation approve the Management Accounts.

The vote was unanimous in favour.

Secondly it was proposed by Richard Perkins and seconded by Ken Applegate that Corporation approve the revised budget for 2010/11 and the one year budget for 2011/12.

The vote was unanimous in favour.

7) Tuition Fees Policy

Presented by the Principal. Richard Perkins again advised that the Tuition Fees Policy had been thoroughly reviewed and was being recommended for approval with the addition of a security deposit for Library use.

Governors were taken through the detailed papers. The key changes from the current policy were explained. Significantly these related to national policy on the remission of fees and payments in advance for additional charges.

With reference to page 3 of the policy it was noted that the reference to “the following groups” not able to..... should in fact read “the following individuals”.

Subject to the amendment above and the addition of the “security deposit” it was proposed by Ken Applegate and seconded by Anne Swietlik that the Tuition fees Policy 2011/12 be accepted.

The vote was unanimous in favour.

8) Key Performance Indicators

Presented by the Principal. Referring governors to the meeting papers the Principal advised that he would focus on those Key Performance Indicators identified as “red” and those where there had been a change since the last report.

With reference to those KPIs identified as “red”, namely the achievement of the Employer Responsive Target, 14-19 Partnership and Adult Learner Numbers, each was reviewed in detail. Bob Blizzard asked if there had been any assessment on impact on adult learner numbers because of the changes to the remission policy. Responding the Principal advised currently 72% of adults did not pay fees. Of this number it was estimated that 1/3rd will not be eligible for remission under the new rules. It was however difficult to be

more precise.

Regarding the Amber KPIs the Principal advised that an additional £65,000 had been received from SFA which would be used in support of the capital works projects. Finally and with respect to the Lowestoft Sixth Form College it was the Principal's understanding that there had been a delay in advising the College's funding allocation and it was unlikely there would be any significant change in the working relationship between the two colleges until this was known.

Governors thanked the Principal for his update and commented favourable on the use of the "RAG" rating.

It was proposed by Richard Perkins and seconded by Ken Applegate that Corporation approve the report.

The vote was unanimous in favour.

9) Strategic Planning Update – verbal

The Principal advised that his report was in anticipation of the Strategic Planning event scheduled for 8 April to be held at M R King's premises in Lowestoft. Alastair King gave directions.

Governors were advised that there was still a lot of activity in the sector that could impact on the College. UCS were still to confirm the tuition fee rates for HE Students. Current indications were that they were likely to be at the high end and if that were the case there would be a need to assess the likely response from the locality. For example would that drive a focus towards Lowestoft residents?

Regarding the Sixth Form College, and as had already been identified, there was still a lack of information on funding levels. The new College had set a student intake figure of 450 which may be difficult to achieve. The need for a closer working relationship may well become clearer once the funding levels were known.

The situation regarding working relations with Great Yarmouth College were still looking positive with discussions on possible shared areas of activity taking place.

Discussions were also taking place with Leiston High School about going for University Technical College status but it was very early in the process to say anymore.

Finally the College had been approached by East Norfolk Schools regarding the possible establishment of an Energy Skills Centre but again it was early in the process to say anymore.

With reference to the 8 April event the Chair apologised to Governors as he was now unable to attend.

Members thanked the Principal for his verbal update which was received.

10) New Governor Review Scheme

Presented by the Clerk who advised the scheme was being recommended by the Search and Remuneration Committee which had thoroughly reviewed it. This was an action in the SAR Action Plan.

It was proposed by the Chair and seconded by Richard Perkins that Corporation adopt the scheme.

The vote was unanimous in favour.

11) Governor Mentoring Scheme

Again presented by the Clerk having been thoroughly reviewed by the Search and Remuneration Committee which was recommending approval. Again this was an action in the Governance SAR Action Plan.

It was proposed by Bob Blizzard and seconded by Stephen Archer that the scheme be adopted.

The vote was unanimous in favour.

12) Confidential Matters

The Clerk advised that, in response to an action from the PFA Audit, the proposed changes to the Corporation Standing Orders, Codes of Practice and agenda formats, had been the subject of discussion at Search and Remuneration and were being recommended for approval.

In discussion it was agreed that the references to "Part 1" and "Part 2" should be removed. It was further noted that this item had been included in the internal audit "follow up" review to ensure it was in place.

It was therefore proposed by Richard Perkins and seconded by Anne Swietlik that Corporation adopt the changes subject to the amendment re "Part 1" and "Part 2".

The vote was unanimous in favour.

Part 1 Open items to be noted

14) Minutes of the Committees

14.1) Audit Committee

Presented by Anne Swietlik. The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2010 were received. The draft minutes for the meeting held on 7 February 2011 were noted. A verbal report on the key items from this meeting were also provided. Details of this can be found with the meeting papers.

14.2) Estates and Finance Committee

Presented by Richard Perkins. The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January were received. A verbal report was given on the meeting held on 14 March 2011. Details of this can be found with the meeting papers.

14.2a) Health & Safety Annual Report

Presented by Richard Perkins who advised that the report had been thoroughly reviewed by the Estates and Finance Committee and was being recommended for approval. He advised the Committee was pleased with the report and had thanked the author, Marc Wild, Health and Safety Manager, for all that he had done. With reference to the cover sheet and the assessment of risk as indicated Ken Applegate requested the assessment

should be “actual” and not “potential”. This was noted. Stephen Archer observed that he would have found the report easier to read had facts and figures been presented in table form.

It was proposed by Richard Perkins and seconded by the Chair the report be approved.

The vote was unanimous in favour.

14.3) Personnel Committee

Presented by Kevin Howes. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 7 February were noted. A verbal report on the key issues discussed at this meeting was provided. Details of this can be found with the meeting papers.

14.4) LOWES Ltd

The draft minutes of the board meeting held on 17 January 2011 and a meeting held on 14 March 2011 were the subject of a verbal report given by Richard Perkins. Details of this can be found with the meeting papers.

14.5) Search and Remuneration Committee

It was agreed that the key issues covered at a meeting held on 7 March 2011, and for which there were as yet no draft minutes, had been covered by other agenda items.

15) Any Other Business

15.1) Strategic Planning Event – 8 April

This item had already been covered.

15.2) Mutual Co-operatives

Presented by the Principal who, with reference to the meeting papers, advised that this initiative was being led by University Campus Suffolk and related to Leap Centres.

The intention of UCS was to establish a mutual cooperative involving the FE Colleges in Suffolk which would enable Colleges to bid for specific activities such as Adult Education. It was the Principal's understanding that these would be costly to set up, there was little detail as yet on what its activities might be or what would be its Business Plan. To this end there was a need to have more information on the Financial Implications and also to carry out any due diligence tests. It was therefore his intention to report back once more details were known.

Responding the Chair observe that he needed to understand more about any potential benefits to the College. Responding the Principal advised this could be in accessing some of the Adult Education budget for Suffolk which totalled approximately £2 million. Teresa added that it could also provide an entity through which the College could bid for European Funding for Projects.

Ken Applegate observed that he needed to understand the business case and opportunity cost especially if the possible benefits could be small.

In summary however governors agreed it would be helpful for the College to keep involved in helping to provide greater clarity at a future meeting. The Principal to report back.

Principal

15.3) Suffolk Skills for the Future

Again introduced by the Principal who reminded governors that a copy of this document had been circulated prior to the meeting. The purpose behind it was to have a coherent strategy across Suffolk. With the exception of one college, New College Suffolk which was focussing more on Essex, all colleges in Suffolk were supportive.

Bob Blizzard asked if Norfolk was producing something similar because it would be important for the College to be aware if it was the case.

Richard Perkins observed that there appeared to be no reference in the document to the North Suffolk Skills Centre and how it could be used to support the strategy. It was agreed that this should be raised. Teresa Miller advised that the focus for the building was 14-16. However it was agreed that the Principal could respond on the Corporation behalf that the paper was supported in principle as it fitted with the Corporations over direction of travel. A request for reference to the NSSC to be made.

Principal

15.4) AoC Code of Governance

The Clerk advised that both he and Richard Perkins had attended the Eastern Region briefing event held at Cambridge Regional College on 15 March. Both reported on their views of the presentation. In summary the AoC did not get a positive response to the proposed Code of Conduct for two reasons. Firstly it was badly written and set too low a standard. Secondly the process being followed, either to seek acceptance to the Code across the sector, or to implement it was seen as flawed.

The Clerk also advised that with reference to the circulated resolution from the Clerks Network on the Code, nine governors had expressed support, no governors had objected. As a result the Chair had taken Chairs Action to indicate the support of the Corporation so this could be added to the list in favour nationally.

It was therefore proposed by Alan Debenham and seconded by Bob Blizzard that Corporation endorse the action taken by the Chair.

The vote was unanimous.

15.5) Student Accommodation

It was agreed this should be taken as a confidential item.

Agenda items 16) & 17)

Confidential Items

18) Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next Corporation Meeting to take place on Monday 23 May 2011 at 5.30 p.m. Venue to be Conference Room1, the Astral Centre.