

Priestley College

Minutes of the Priestley College Governing Body Meeting
held at 4.30pm on Thursday, 9 December 2010
in the Learning Resource Centre

PRESENT:

Mr R Haslam	Chair
Mr C Deans	Student Member
Mr A Farquharson	
Mrs D Farrent	
Dr M Hartill	
Mr G Hill	
Mrs K Hope	Staff Member
Mr J Monaghan	
Mr M D Salmon	Staff Member
Cllr K Simcock	
Mr MK Southworth	Principal
Mrs D Stead	
Mrs S Yates	
Mr P McMellon	Clerk to the Governing Body

Also in attendance:

Mr M W Grant	Deputy Principal
Mrs J McCann	Vice Principal
Mr I M Lewis	Director of Finance

Prior to the meeting, Governors reviewed the College Video used at recent Open Evenings.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Y Bottomley, Mrs A Bright, Mr P Dyke, Ms E Groarke and Professor T Wheeler..

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No member declared any personal interest in any item on the agenda.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2010 were accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair included the following in his report:

(i) Association of Colleges – N.W. Regional Meeting

The recent meeting, attended by chairs and governors of colleges in the North-West, received a presentation on the initial reactions to the Government's Autumn 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. More detail was awaited, but it seemed inevitable that measures stemming from the CSR would translate into significant challenges for colleges and particularly for students.

(ii) Review of Governance – Code of Conduct Proposals

The Chair reported that, despite reported rejection of the proposals in many parts of the sector, there seemed to be a determination that a new 'Code of Conduct' for governing bodies be introduced in the sector. The need or justification for this additional instrument remained unclear, and there were aspects of the draft Code – the limit on terms of office for governors, for example – which would have to be addressed. He felt strongly that only the interests of the College should be reflected in decisions on terms of office renewals. Subject to continuing positive contribution, perhaps evidenced by individual 'annual reviews', the question of limitations should be left to the Governing Body advised by the Search Committee and himself. He added that discussions with the Principal and the Clerk had already commenced in anticipation of the development, although he intended making further representations on the matter to the AoC.

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal presented his report, which had been circulated with the Agenda, to the meeting.

He drew attention to the outstanding achievement of student Simon Perfect (2008-10) who had been formally acknowledged as the top-performing student out of the 6836 A-Level English Literature student in the country in summer 2010. The Governing Body shared his pride at Simon's impressive achievement.

The Principal confirmed the bleak prognosis of consequences of the Comprehensive Spending Review. The 'levelling' of funding between 6th forms in schools and 6th form colleges was appropriate, but overall reductions in funding unit costs would obviously be a challenge. Of at least as much concern was the proposed abolition of the Educational Maintenance Allowance scheme. This measure, together with the expected increase in student tuition fees in H.E., would test the resolve of many students and their families to remain in education. He reported on his correspondence and discussions with Mr David Mowat (MP) on this matter.

The Governing Body discussed the CSR consequences and noted that the Annual Governance Seminar in January 2011 would consider further the College's responses to the new challenges.

The Principal confirmed that, where common measures of performance (between schools and colleges) were applied, the performance of colleges, including that of Priestley College, generally compared favourably to that of the schools, and this was despite the funding disadvantage of the colleges.

He confirmed that a successful event had been held to mark the opening of the LRC extension, and he also reported on feedback from current students, including at the recent 'Principal's Surgery' session, on their experiences at the College. There were, naturally, suggestions for improvements, but happily nothing of concern about the core teaching and learning service.

The Governing Body thanked the Principal for his report.

7. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Mr J A Farquharson (Chair of Audit Committee) presented his Committee's report on 2009/10. He went through each section of the report, drawing attention to the sequence of reassuring audit and risk management reports received in the course of the year.

Governors were pleased to receive such a reassuring report, and joined the Chair in thanking Mr Farquharson for his Committee's diligent contribution to the governance, controls and risk management of the College.

RESOLVED : That Audit Committee's Annual Report (on 2009/10) is received.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

The Principal presented the Annual Report on risk management in 2009/10. He reminded the Governing Body about the cycle of reviews and reports under the current risk management arrangements and he commented on a number of the 'November 2010 Update' sections of the final report on 2009/10. He also reminded the Governing Body that Internal Auditor had once again confirmed that the College warranted 'Risk Enabled' status following the most recent review of the College's risk management processes.

Mr J A Farquharson confirmed that the Audit Committee had been very pleased to receive such a comprehensively reassuring year-end report.

Governors examined the report, and, in particular, the 'Commentary on key issues' section, wherein campus development considerations were once again prominent. The Principal also elaborated upon the external scrutiny measures which the College had applied to provide solid assurance of the validity of self assessed gradings. There had been very reassuring outcomes following the recent external scrutiny (by Ofsted inspector consultants) of the Sport and Professional Studies curriculum areas and much in general to confirm that risks associated with the core provision of the College were being effectively addressed.

The Chair thanked Mr J A Farquharson and the Audit Committee for their assiduous oversight of the College's risk management provisions.

RESOLVED : That the Risk Management Annual Report (2009/10) is received.

9. AUDIT MANAGEMENT LETTER 2009/10

Mr J A Farquharson presented the Audit Management Letter 2009/10 which had been presented to Audit Committee on 29 November 2010 by the external auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers. He confirmed that the Letter was, once again, very positive in its observations and that there were no significant concerns to report.

The Governing Body then considered each section of the Letter. The 'Summary of unadjusted misstatements' section was discussed and the Governing Body concluded that this did not present any cause for significant concern.

Mr Farquharson concluded by suggesting that the Letter offered much reassurance to the College when considering the Annual Report/Financial Statements.

RESOLVED : That the Audit Management Letter 2009/10 is received.

10. ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2009/10

Mr G Hill drew attention to the copies of the Annual Report and the Financial Statements which had been distributed with the agenda. It was noted that the Audit Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee had both examined and approved the Report/Statements, and had recommended acceptance of both documents. Mr Hill commented on the extremely high quality of the year-end accounts, reflecting, as they did, an excellent performance by the College, and also by Mr I Lewis and his team. He also praised College Management for their effective delivery, within budget, of capital development projects during the year.

Mr Lewis then provided a Powerpoint summary of the key points of the Report/Statements. He went through the Income and Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet, giving more details on the key movements therein. He also reminded the governing Body about current depreciation practices, in line with the Fixed Assets Policy.

The Governing Body then considered each section, noting that the year-on-year achievement of significant surpluses had continued in 2009/10. It was also considered that the current level of Reserves (Balance

Sheet) reflected good strategic management of the College's finances, allowing the College to make excellent provisions for current students whilst achieving significant progress in the development of the campus. The College's financial position was as strong as might realistically be desired in anticipation of forthcoming budget challenges, and the 'Outstanding' financial status was warranted.

RESOLVED : That the Annual Report and Financial Statements 2009/10 are approved and that the Financial Statements and the Letter of Representation should be signed by the Chair and Principal.

11. COLLEGE SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT 2009/10

Mrs D Stead drew the Governing Body's attention to the draft Report distributed with the agenda papers. The Report had been considered and, with a few amendments agreed, approved by the Curriculum & Quality Committee, and was now recommended to the Governing Body for approval

Mr M W Grant then provide the Governing Body with a detailed presentation on two particular dimensions of the Report:

(a) Confirmation of Grades

He reminded the Governing Body about the Curriculum Grades validation arrangements (involving members of the Governing Body) and he outlined in more detail the external scrutiny measures (see Principal's Report – Item 6 above) which had been applied. He then presented the whole College grade profile and went through each sub-category outlining the rationale and evidence for each grade. He pointed out that the grade for Safeguarding had been changed (from Grade 2 to Grade 1) following external scrutiny.

He then went through the gradings for each curriculum area, indicating where there had been change from the previous year. The Governing Body noted that, although there was now no curriculum area below Grade 2, the grading of contributory categories had, in a small number of cases, deteriorated. Mr Grant enlarged upon the reasons for those developments and outlined the measures which had been taken to address issues.

The Governing Body then considered the Teaching and Learning Grade (Grade 2) and the contributory factors to this, in particular the Equality and Diversity contribution. The need to secure clearer evidence as progress was achieved was accepted. The developments relating to Learner Support and to staff recruitment were recognised. The success rates trends were discussed together with the very positive value added picture. It was generally felt that, whilst Grade 2 was appropriate, a Grade 1 for Teaching and Learning should be achievable in the near future.

(b) Key Strengths and Areas for Improvement

Mr Grant reported on the key strengths and issues under each category.

The Governing Body discussed the proposals for addressing identified issues, noting where measures calculated to effect improvement were proposed or had already been implemented.

The Governing Body thanked Mr Grant for his comprehensive report on the key aspects of the Report. Consideration was then given to the Business Support section of the SAR and to the extent to which this development would contribute systematically to improved support services.

In summary, the Governing Body concluded that there was rational validity to all self assessed gradings, and that the self assessment process was being effectively used as a tool to drive quality improvement.

Mrs Stead drew attention to the great deal of staff effort at various levels put into the compilation of the Report.

RESOLVED : That the College Self Assessment Report 2009/10 is approved

12. POLICIES REVIEWS

(i). Quality Framework

Mrs D Stead presented the revised Quality Framework document which the Curriculum & Quality Committee had recently endorsed. In view of the scale of change to the document (and in view of the particular importance of the Framework in terms of the Governing Body's overarching responsibilities), the Committee had agreed to refer the document to the Governing Body for final approval.

RESOLVED : That the new Quality Framework is approved.

(ii) Redundancy Policy

The Chair presented the revised Redundancy Policy document which the Remuneration & H.R. Committee had recently endorsed. In view of the scale of change to the document, the Committee had agreed to refer the document to the Governing Body for final approval.

RESOLVED : That the new Redundancy Policy is approved.

(iii) Staff Disciplinary Procedures

The Chair presented the revised Staff Disciplinary Procedures document which the Remuneration & H.R. Committee had recently endorsed. In view of the scale of change to the document, the Committee had agreed to refer the document to the Governing Body for final approval.

RESOLVED : That the new Staff Disciplinary Procedures are approved.

13. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

(i) Finance & General Purposes Committee

Mr G Hill presented his report together with the full report of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting on 1 December 2010. He drew attention to the discussion on the government's proposed abolition of Educational Maintenance Allowances.

The Governing Body noted that the Committee's review of the 2009/10 Health & Safety Report had resulted in the Committee concluding that there were no significant issues in the College's health/safety provisions.

Finance Report – Period 3 (October) of 2010/11

The Period 3 report had been included in the agenda papers. Mr Hill confirmed that the Committee's review of budget control for the first three months of the financial year had not identified any causes for concern.

RESOLVED: That the Report of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting on 1 December 2010 is accepted.

(ii) Remuneration & Human Resources Committee

The Chair presented his report together with the full report of the Remuneration & H.R. Committee meeting on 30 November 2010.

RESOLVED: That the Report of the Remuneration & Human Resources Committee meeting on 30 November 2010 is accepted and the decisions therein, including that relating to pay award for Clerk/College Secretary, are endorsed.

(iii) Search Committee

Mr J Monaghan presented his report together with the full report of the meeting of the Search Committee on 30 November 2010.

RESOLVED: That the Report of the Search Committee meeting on 30 November 2010 is accepted.

(iv) Curriculum & Quality Committee

Mrs D Stead presented her reports and the full reports of the meetings of the Curriculum & Quality Committee on 14 October 2010 and 25 November 2010.

RESOLVED : That the Reports of the Curriculum & Quality Committee meetings on 14 October 2010 and 25 November 2010 are accepted, and the decisions therein are endorsed.

(v) Strategic Planning Committee

The Chair presented his report and the full report of the meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee on 22 November 2010. He reminded the Governing Body that arrangements had now been made for the Annual Governance Seminar to take place at The Cottons on 28/29 January 2011. A copy of the final programme for that occasion was distributed.

RESOLVED : That the Report of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on 22 November 2010 is accepted and that the decisions therein are endorsed.

(vi) Audit Committee

Mr J A Farquharson presented the Vice Chair's report and full report of the meeting of the Audit Committee on 29 November 2010.

He drew attention to the risk management reports on the current year, and to the agreed changes to the Risk Management Policy.

He also drew attention to the 'short version' of the FMCE which the Committee had examined and endorsed.

RESOLVED : That the Report of the Audit Committee meeting on 29 November 2010 is accepted and that the decisions therein, including that relating to the 2009/10 FMCE, are endorsed.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 4.30pm on Thursday, 24 February 2011.

PMcMellon
9 December 2010

Length of Meeting: 1 hr and 45 mins

Accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair

Signature

Date