

Priestley College

Minutes of the Priestley College Governing Body Meeting
held at 4.30pm on Thursday, 14 May 2015
in the Lewis Carroll Building

PRESENT:	Mr R Haslam	Chair
	Mr A Cannell	
	Mr D Cathie	Student Member
	Mr B Craven	Student Member
	Mr P Dyke	
	Mr J A Farquharson	
	Mr M W Grant	Principal
	Mrs K Hope	Staff Member
	Mr A Osborne	
	Mr M D Salmon	Staff Member
	Ms K Simcock	
	Mrs S Yates	
	Mr P McMellon	Clerk to the Governing Body
Also in attendance:	Mrs J McCann	Vice Principal (Resources)
	Mr G Contos	Vice Principal (Curriculum & Standards)
	Mr D McGuire	Director of Finance
	Mr K Trelfa	Chair of Ashton Sixth Form College
	Mr D Truffas	Clerk of Ashton Sixth Form College

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr G Hill, Mr J Monaghan, Mrs C Owen, Mrs B Scott-Herron and Mrs D Stead.

The Chair explained that Mr K Trelfa and Mr D Truffas were in attendance as part of local 'peer reviewing' and best practice sharing.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Clerk declared an interest in Item 11 (vi).

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2015 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) General Election Outcome

With the retention of Nicky Morgan as Secretary of State for Education, there may be reason to suppose that the degree of change to previous policies may be moderated. It was also pleasing to note that David Mowat MP had been successful locally.

Other likely consequences of the General Election were discussed.

(ii) Individual Reviews

With the pilot set of individual reviews (Chairs of Committees) now almost completed, the success of the experiment opens the way for extension of the of scheme for all other Governors. This is covered in the Governance & Search Committee report (Item 11 (vi) below), and the Clerk will now make arrangements for the production of a schedule of reviews for 2015/16.

(iii) Lesson Visits

In response to the Chair's request, Mr P Dyke reported on his recent visits to classes (A2 Chemistry and A2 Physics). Mr Dyke had noted consistent businesslike and focused approaches, but with apparently good relationships between the students and their teachers, the latter evidenced by impressive discussions and exchanges. Use of technology was notable. The challenging of two instances of student lateness was also systematic and uncompromising. He had appreciated the experience and felt that a similar visit to other areas would be of benefit.

(iv) Meetings with Staff

Although there already exists a series of annual events whereby Governors had opportunities to meet and discuss College life with staff, it was proposed, partly with Section 9.22 of the new Code of Governance (see Item 12 below) in mind, that opportunities for staff to meet Governors to discuss the governance of the College should be created.

It was agreed that such meeting opportunities should be created ahead of the formal scheduled Governing Body meetings in 2015/16.

(v) F.E. Commissioner's Letter

The Chair went through the points offered by the F.E. Commissioner in his letter of 27 March 2015 to all colleges. He pointed out that Dr Collins was, in fact, the commissioner for General FE colleges rather than for sixth form colleges, but the checklist was nonetheless useful.

(vi) Electronic Meeting Documentation

The Chair asked all Governors to complete the questionnaire pro-forma on electronic preferences. He confirmed that most progress had been made in the substitution of electronic access to key documents – albeit not exclusively meeting agenda documents - for the traditional posted paper access. Governor compliance with this movement was appreciated and certainly assisted the College's cost-cutting and sustainability drives.

(vii) Financial Status of Colleges in the Sector

Recent reports on the deteriorating financial strength of many colleges (including approximately one-third of sixth form colleges) confirmed that close attention to financial performance had to be maintained. The position at Priestley College continued to be relatively strong, but further challenges undoubtedly lay ahead.

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (INCLUDING TEACHING LEARNING & ASSESSMENT PRESENTATION BASED ON 'COLLEGE UPDATE')

The Principal presented his report which had been circulated in full, including copies of the 'College Update and the current College Improvement Plan, with the agenda papers.

He drew attention to the College Update document and linked this to the updating information on student retention in his meeting report. Governors discussed the strategies currently in use and noted the measures which were in line for the crucial student registration and early term periods in the next academic year. The attractive of worthwhile apprenticeships and employment opportunities would continue to make retention at College that much more difficult, but the College had at least succeeded in stemming that flow in the current academic year.

The ongoing concern about the anticipated impact of new external assessments (BTEC Level 2 Extended Certificates) was noted, but, on the positive side, news of some excellent student progression successes were indicative of the College's effective provision for the community. Similarly, attainment of the Matrix quality mark had highlighted the College's effectiveness in 'making a difference' to the lives of young people.

Mr G Contos (Vice Principal – Curriculum & Standards) provided more detail on the arrangements whereby the local adult and community learning provision would operate (with WBC and Warrington Collegiate) in future, and the Governing Body endorsed the line which College Management had taken in this matter.

The Principal also drew attention to changes at senior management level and to new appointments at senior level in local schools.

Mr Contos then presented the latest version of the College Improvement Plan, as updated since the February Governance Seminar and the Curriculum & Standards Committee meeting in March. He went through each section of the report, and confirmed that, at present, the RAG rating showed no 'red' concerns. He reported that a number of major examination sittings had already taken place and that attendance had been broadly very reassuring.

Mrs S Yates pointed out that the descriptive nature of some comments on the College Improvement Plan made it difficult to identify progress. Mr Contos confirmed that, whilst the College Improvement Plan provided a top-level report on actions, more evaluative judgements were recorded in the curriculum SARs. He undertook to reflect on the valid point which Mrs Yates had made.

The Chair thanked the Principal for his report.

7. COLLEGE MISSION AND VISION – REVIEW

The Chair drew attention to the proposed draft statements included in the agenda documentation. He reminded the Governing Body about the stages in the development of the new statements, including the lengthy and detailed discussions at The Cottons on the annual Governance Strategic Planning event in February 2015. He reported on the involvement of staff and students and other stakeholders, and he finally advised on the matters considered by the Governance and Search Committee at its meeting on 7 May 2015 (see Item 11 (v) below).

Mr D Cathie confirmed that involvement of the student body in the process had been appreciated and that the general consensus was that two appropriately succinct yet aspirational statements were now proposed.

The recommended statements were discussed and it was

RESOLVED : That the following statements are approved:

Vision : "To be the region's leading provider of high quality educational opportunities, responding to the needs of the community we serve."

Mission : “To inspire, challenge and support students to excel in learning and in life.”

8. STUDENT MEMBERS’ REPORT

Mr B Craven and Mr D Cathie included the following matters in their report on the issues which were currently occupying the College Council and/or the Student Council:

- (i) Details of the elections to the 2015/16 College Council, including the process of election, were provided. There had been a gratifyingly high turn-out of student voters.
- (ii) The annual Valedictory dinner was imminent and demand for places was high.
- (iii) The recent ‘food forum’ had provided students with a good opportunity to raise various issues with the contracted provider of catering services. The process had been open and positive and there now appeared to be the prospect of improvements in a number of regards.
- (iv) At the February Governance Seminar, Governors had noted one negative comment about arrangements in the Learning Resource Centre. This had subsequently been investigated and, along with the other rules and expectations in the LRC, acknowledged as appropriate and in the best interest of all users. In particular, the tight controls on drinks in the LRC needed to be maintained to as to protect equipment.
- (v) The issues which had followed the Moodle upgrade had been effectively resolved.

The Governing Body noted the report and discussed further recent student events surrounding the General Election (local candidate ‘Drop-in’ sessions and the Question Time event successfully staged by the College Council.

The Principal also complimented the student representatives on the constructive and intelligent way in which they had contributed to review meeting with senior representatives of the bus companies which serve the College.

Finally, the Governing Body joined the Chair in wishing Mr Craven and Mr Cathie success in their examinations.

9. FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES – ANNUAL REVIEW

Mr A Cannell presented the Financial Objectives for 2015/16 as recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee following detailed consideration at the meeting on 7 May 2015.

Mr Cannell drew attention to the single recommended change whereby the Financial Health grade target would become ‘Good’ instead of ‘Good/Outstanding’. He reported on the considerations which lay behind this recommendation for change.

RESOLVED : That the Financial Objectives for 2015/16 are approved.

10. GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP – RE-APPOINTMENT OF MS K SIMCOCK

The Governance & Search Committee’s recommendation at the expiry of Ms K Simcock’s fifth term of office was considered. In accepting the Committee’s recommendation, the grounds for further re-appointment were unanimously endorsed.

RESOLVED : That Ms Kelly Simcock is re-appointed for a further four year term of office from 1 June 2015 to 31 May 2019.

11. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

(i) Audit Committee

Mr J A Farquharson presented his report and the full report of the meeting of the Audit Committee on 16 March 2015.

RESOLVED : That the Report of the Audit Committee meeting on 16 March 2015 is accepted and that the decisions therein are endorsed.

(ii) Curriculum & Standards Committee

The report from Mrs D Stead, together with the full report of the Curriculum & Standards Committee meeting on 26 March 2015, was presented.

RESOLVED: That the Report of the Curriculum & Standards Committee meeting on 26 March 2015 is accepted and the decisions therein are endorsed.

(iii) Strategic Planning Committee

Mr R Haslam presented his report and the full report of the meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee on 6 May 2015.

He confirmed that the review of the College's Mission and Vision statements had been completed (see Item 7 above) and he now drew attention to the Strategic Plan Objectives and related arrangements which the Committee had considered.

The Principal reminded the Governing Body about the processes and considerations which had culminated in the Objectives now recommended.

RESOLVED : That the Report of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on 76 May 2015 is accepted and that the recommendations therein, including the following as Objectives for the next Strategic Plan:

1. To remain, and to be recognised as, the region's number one provider of excellent Post 16 educational opportunities through the delivery of a range of high quality academic, vocational and adult programmes.

2. To maximise and exploit opportunities which guarantee the financial stability of the organisation.

3. To develop strategic partnerships (education/business/community) which are to the benefit of Priestley College and the communities we serve.

are approved.

The Governing Body also noted and endorsed the Principal's actions in the wake of the Ofsted review of adult and community learning under Warrington Borough Council.

(iv) Finance & General Purposes Committee

Mr A Cannell presented his report and the full report of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 7 May 2015. He drew attention to policies (Data Protection, Publication Scheme and Sustainable Development) approved and he confirmed that the Financial objectives had been dealt with earlier in the agenda (Item 9 above). The change to Financial Regulations was also explained. Finally, Mr Cannell urged Governors to partake of the post-meeting tour of the excellent new facilities provided through the efficient delivery of the BCIF 4 project.

RESOLVED : That the Report of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting on 7 May 2015 is accepted, and the decisions/recommendations therein are endorsed/approved.

(v) Governance & Search Committee

The report from Mr J Monaghan, together with the full report of the Governance & Search Committee meeting on 7 May 2015, was presented. It was noted that the re-appointment of Ms K Simcock had been dealt with (Item 10 above) and that the new Code of Good Governance would be considered later in the agenda (Item 12 below).

The updating of the Access to Governing Body policy was also noted.

RESOLVED : That the Report of the Governance & Search Committee meeting on 7 May 2015 is accepted and that the decisions and recommendations therein are endorsed/accepted.

(vi) Remuneration & H.R. Committee

Mr R Haslam presented his report and the full report of the meeting of the Remuneration & H.R. Committee on 7 May 2015. He congratulated the Principal on the conducting of the first Staff Survey of recent years. Details of the Survey were reviewed.

(The Clerk left the meeting at this point)

Mr Haslam then drew attention to the recommended change to the Clerk’s contract of employment and provided details on the change, which would only directly affect the ‘College Secretary’ element of Mr P McMellon’s employment.

RESOLVED : That the report of the Remuneration & H.R. Committee meeting on 7 May 2015 is accepted and that the recommendation and decisions therein, including the change to the Clerk/College Secretary’s contract of employment, are endorsed/accepted.

(The Clerk returned to the meeting at this point)

12. NEW CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR ENGLISH COLLEGES

The report from the Governance & Search Committee meeting on 7 May 2015 was considered. The issue covered by section 9.29 of the new Code was, once again, discussed at length. The Committee’s grounds for advising the qualification of (otherwise) full adoption were reviewed but the basis of rejection of 9.29 (limitation of the number of terms of office any governor could or ‘should normally’ serve) was solid, at least as regards current and foreseeable conditions at Priestley College.

(Mr K Trelfa and Mr D Truffas commented on the likely treatment of the new Code at Ashton Sixth Form College).

RESOLVED : That, subject to a clear caveat as regards section 9.29 (on limitation to the number of terms of office), the new Code of Good Governance for English Colleges is adopted.

13. HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY – ANNUAL REVIEW

The Governing Body noted Mr A Cannell’s report on the Finance & General Purposes Committee’s examination of the Health & Safety Policy.

RESOLVED : That the Health & Safety Policy, as amended, is approved.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 4.30pm on Thursday, 9 July 2015.

PMcMellon
15 May 2015

Length of Meeting: 1 hr and 55 mins

Accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair

Signature

Date

Initials of Chair: