



MINUTES OF THE TRC CORPORATION MEETING

MONDAY 4 JULY 2016

PRESENT

Mr P Jagger MBE (Chair); Ms J Collier (Vice Chair); Mr R Gray; Mr T Grice; Mr S Kirk; Dr P R Williams; Mr J Ellis; Mrs A Todd; Mr T Mulroy; Cllr D Roche

In Attendance:

Mr M Patterson, Vice Principal Finance & Resources; Mr T Dowling, Vice Principal Teaching & Learning; Mrs S Martin, Clerk

APOLOGIES

16.48 Apologies were received from Ms M Allen

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

16.49 Members were reminded of the need to declare any interests and reserved the right to declare an interest at any stage of the meeting.

MINUTES

16.50 The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 May 2016 were agreed as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

At this point, the chair amended the order of the agenda. Items 8.1 and 8.3 were brought forward to allow Mr T Mulroy and Cllr D Roche to participate in the meeting subject to their appointment being approved during item 8.3. It was also agreed that items 9, 10 and 13 could be brought forward to immediately follow item 7 as the VP F&R needed to leave the meeting earlier than planned.

Please note that the minutes are documented in agenda order except for the 'Approval of new members' shown below. No members arrived or left at any point during the meeting, which remained quorate throughout.

APPROVAL OF NEW MEMBERS

Having been present up to this point following the introductions, Mr T Mulroy and Cllr D Roche left the room for the following item.

16.51 The draft, unconfirmed Minutes of the Governance and Search Committee meetings held on 25th April 2016 and 21st June 2016 were noted, with reference to the item recommending that Mr Timothy Mulroy and Cllr David Roche be approved as foundation member and external member respectively.

- RESOLVED:**
- 16.51.1 To accept Mr Timothy Mulroy as a foundation member of the Corporation.**
 - 16.51.2 To approve Cllr D Roche as an external member of the**

Corporation

Upon their approval both Mr Timothy Mulroy and Cllr David Roche returned to the meeting and were welcomed as members of the Corporation.

- 16.52 The Clerk provided an update on the parent vacancies discussed at the Governance and Search meeting on 21st June 2016. The parents evening attended by the Clerk and Mrs A Todd had generated some interest in the role of parent governor. To date, one follow up e-mail had been received and initially it seemed there may have been an issue with eligibility. However, the instruments and articles establish that this is not the case and therefore the Clerk will respond to let them know that an application would be welcomed.
- 16.53 Mr J Ellis referred to item 16.17 in the Governance and Search minutes dated 21st June 2016, commenting that he would benefit from governor training and development and was keen to know what the training would include. The Chair explained that the introduction of a governor training programme is a recent action point so is yet to be complete. This will be a future agenda item.
- 16.54 It was noted that Mr S Kirk was incorrectly listed as being present at the Governance and Search Committee meeting on 21st June 2016. The Clerk is to amend the minutes before the next Governance and Search Committee meeting.

MATTERS ARISING

- 16.55 The Corporation received a list of actions arising from previous meetings. It was noted that items were either complete, ongoing or scheduled for a decision at a future meeting.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

- 16.56 The May 2016 management accounts were presented to members.

The VP F&R confirmed that income had been as planned. Referring to the variation in staffing costs the VP F&R explained that, as previously discussed, this was due to increased student numbers along with the need for maternity and sickness cover. Also, increased exam costs were a result of increased student numbers along with the expansion of more expensive BTEC courses.

Underspend within the I.T budget was highlighted by the VP F&R along with the departmental underspend as a result of moving to the linear A-Level programme. The outturn forecast is a surplus of £122k.

Mr T Grice referred to the increase in student numbers discussed during a previous meeting, and queried whether the full extent of this increase was reflected in the figures.

The VP F&R and Principal both stated that the 2016/17 funding allocation would be increased for the extra 45 students against target. At one stage – immediately after enrolment in early September the projection had been higher but the extremely high enrolment had produced drop-out prior to census date.

The management accounts were noted.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL PLANS

16.57 Having been circulated with the agenda, the VP F & R referred members to the financial plans for 2016/17 – 2018 /19 highlighting key points for information. The 2016/17 changes are based on the final funding body allocations and student applications as at 1st April. Future years' student numbers and rates are based on best estimates using the local demographic figures and government funding announcements along with the closure of or reduction of options at some sixth form provision elsewhere in the local area. The funding rate remains frozen meaning that additional costs resulting from salary increases, the apprentice levy and the introduction of the National Living Wage are to be covered by savings. The higher rate resulting from the National Living Wage will initially only affect cleaning staff, but in time will affect catering, sports centre, site and some administrative support staff. Looking ahead to 2018/19, £230,000 of unspecified savings have been stated and these will be known by 2017/18. The self- assessment of financial health is judged to be outstanding for the years 2015/16 – 2017/18. The VP F&R requested that members note Annex 1: Checklist.

Mr T Grice raised concern that spending reductions would be spread across college functions, in an already much slimmed-down structure, as shortfalls in student numbers due to demographics were unlikely to fall neatly in one area. Numerous members responded to this by suggesting that while the budget projected cautious recruitment figures linked to the demographic dip in 2017-18 the savings needed could be reduced significantly by continuing to capture an increased share of the student numbers available. The possible positive financial impact of the MAT option, if taken, might also change these figures for the better.

The Chair suggested a vote of confidence in the budget and financial plans presented to which members agreed.

RESOLVED: 16.57 to approve the budget and financial plans for 2016/17 – 2018/19

AUDIT COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Draft minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 20th June 2016

16.58 The draft, unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit Committee were presented by Ms J Collier for noting.

The Chair referred to Page 2 of the minutes, in which Mr M Chaudhary had suggested that, given the level of risk involved in joining a Multi-Academy Trust, the final decision made should be unanimous and not by majority vote. Ms J Collier and Mr T Grice spoke about the use of special resolutions within the private sector, and that in the case of the MAT decision it may be worth considering that votes in favour of joining a MAT should be at least 75%.

In response to this the Chair requested that the Clerk clarify the position on voting and include as an agenda item at the next Corporation meeting, whilst noting that whatever the method of voting, the risk involved remains the same. It was further suggested that, by making it a unanimous vote, this could create additional risk by effectively giving an individual a veto over the decision on the College's future direction. Numerous members backed this point of view, expressing the concern that requiring a unanimous decision may not produce the best result for the long term future of the college.

Risk Management Action Plan

16.59 Ms J Collier referred to the Risk Management Action Plan which was recommended by the Audit Committee for Corporation approval.

With reference to Risk 1.6 on the Action Plan, Mr J Ellis queried the due-diligence requirements for the process of joining a MAT and stated that he believed due-diligence to have been undertaken as part of the Area-Based Review. The Principal and Chair explained that due-diligence was not part of the ABR process and this is work yet to be done. An informal due-diligence process will take place ahead of the decision to be made in November 2016. If the decision is made to pursue joining the MAT then a formal due-diligence process will be initiated at that point.

The VP F&R confirmed that he will undertake the informal due-diligence process and that basic financial information has been requested from potential partner schools. Governors agreed that such information was important to have at this stage.

Mr S Kirk referred to Risk 5.7 on the Risk Register 'new SFC appraisal system difficult to implement' and questioned whether, with a score of 44, this needed further discussion. The Principal reassured members that although the score is currently 44, agreement has almost been reached so it is anticipated that the risk score will soon reduce significantly.

RESOLVED: 16.59 To approve the Risk Management Action Plan 2016/17

Audit Plan 2016/17

16.60 Having been circulated with the agenda, the VP F&R explained that the Audit Plan 2016/17 was similar to previous years despite the change to the format of the accounts resulting from the Financial Reporting Standard (FRS 102). It was noted that there has been a one-off increase in the auditors' fees of £500 to cover the cost of the FRS 102 changes.

The Audit Plan was noted.

GOVERNANCE AND SEARCH COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Draft minutes of the G&S meetings held on 25th April 2016 and 21st June 2016

16.61 Refer to item 16.51

Corporation Members – Recruitment and Selection Policy

16.62 The Governance and Search Committee minutes dated 25th April 2016 recommended Corporation approval of the recruitment and selection policy. However, in the Governance and Search Minutes dated 21st June 2016 Ms J Collier, having read guidelines published by the National Governors' Association, suggested that it is now good practice to obtain references before appointing external governors. The Clerk explained that the draft recruitment and selection policy currently states that for external members 'references may be sought in respect of candidates'. Having taken advice on the matter, the Clerk gave feedback that ultimately it is for the Corporation to decide whether or not to pursue references and include this as an essential requirement. The Clerk did advise, however, that the policy should be explicit about when references would be required and should not simply state that they 'may' be required. This prompted further discussion on the value of references and in which circumstances they should be requested.

Members reached agreement that the draft policy should be amended to state that references would be required for all potential parent and external governors, except in cases in which there had been a nomination. It was agreed that the nomination in itself acts as a reference.

RESOLVED: 16:62 That the Recruitment and Selection Policy be approved subject to

the agreed amendments, with an amended copy e-mailed to all members for any further comment.

Approval of new members

16.63 Refer to item 16.51.

Amendment to standing orders

16.64 Referring to 16.07 in the Governance & Search Committee minutes dated 25 April 2016, the Clerk confirmed the standing orders had been amended to include reference to the recruitment and selection policy.

RESOLVED: 16.64 To approve the amended standing orders

COURSE AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION FEES 2016/17

16.65 The course and freedom of information fees were presented for approval.

RESOLVED: 16.65 To approve the course and freedom of information fees 2016/17

FEES POLICY

16.66 With no change from the previous year, the Fees Policy for 2016/17 was presented for approval.

RESOLVED: 16.66 To approve the Fees Policy for 2016/17

ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

16.67 The Principal referred to the Safeguarding Policy, highlighting all the amendments including those that had been taken directly from the RMBC policy.

RESOLVED 16.67 To approve the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

16.68 The Annual Safeguarding Report 2015/16 was also considered by the board, with the Principal presenting the statistics within the report and reassuring members that a flaw in the system when identifying online searches had been resolved. There is now an extra procedure in place to sift actual searches from predictive searches.

The Principal informed members that suicide and mental health issues remain a major concern. Cllr D Roche spoke of the Suicide Prevention Strategy Action Group within Rotherham, explaining that they have information that could be useful to have around college.

The Report was noted and received.

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2016/17

16.69 The Chair noted that no decision had been taken on whether or not to continue with the governance structure that had been trialled during 2015/16. Members were asked whether they wanted to discuss this in more detail at the next Corporation meeting. The general consensus was that the new governance structure had been a success and should continue without further discussion. The dates of the meetings for 2016/17 were agreed.

**RESOLVED: 16.69.1 To continue with the new governance structure
16.69.2 To approve the calendar of meetings for 2016/17**

MAT/ABR UPDATE

16.70 Having been circulated with the agenda, members were referred to the Area Review Summary Report which was discussed at length. The key points arising from the discussion are summarised as follows:

- If TRC makes the decision to stand alone this could in a worst-case scenario result in isolation for the college, preventing the potential for cross fertilisation that joining the MAT could bring.
- Future expansion of the MAT i.e. introducing new, less successful schools is a potential issue. It could be that in a worst case scenario the MAT, once it has expanded, may prove to be unsuccessful and there could be negative consequences arising from this.
- At this stage, proceedings are still very much about discussion amongst Head teachers/Principals, Finance Directors/Business Managers and Chairs along with completion of the informal due-diligence process. An 'in principle' decision will not be taken until November 2016 and will then be subject to formal due diligence and public consultation.

16.71 Expanding on comments made during item 16.59, the VP F&R emphasised the importance of timely gathering of financial information. The Principal said that close communication between the Heads' and Finance Directors' group is now needed.

RESOLVED: 16. To endorse the approach of the VP F&R in obtaining the financial Information required (i.e. an informal due diligence report and, through liaison with the Heads' group, costing of functions at a central and institutional level within the MAT) to assist the Corporation in making the final MAT decision.

LEARNER SURVEY

16.72 The Principal confirmed the results had been positive, with the main area for development being more frequent file-checking exercises, and agreed to send the information to all members via e-mail (*A technical issue meant it wasn't possible for the results to be displayed via Power Point during the meeting*). It was also agreed that 'Learner Survey' should be added to the agenda for the next Corporation meeting in September.

FINAL RETENTION FIGURES 2015-16

16.73 A report on the retention of students was provided, including the year on year comparisons From 2004 – 2015. The Principal commented that with a drop-out from 1 November of 4.2% for 2015 -16, only 2005-6 had produced a better outcome since records started in this form – and the 4.4% drop out since 1 October was the best on record . All staff involved were commended for this achievement.

The report was noted and received.

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

16.74 The VP T&L informed members that the current Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy is reaching the end date, with the new strategy due to be implemented from September 2016. Referring to Priority 3 – 'utilising ICT as a learning tool', it was confirmed that this priority had achieved the least success as can be seen from the amber RAG rating. The Digital Learning Group have produced recommendations and these are due to be presented to staff before the end of term and it will also continue as a priority within the new strategy.

Referring to the new strategy, the VP T&L explained that there would be no radical changes, with some of the existing priority areas continuing alongside new elements. Additionally, the aim in future is to ensure the strategy becomes more central by cross referencing the content with training sessions and the quality improvement plans produced by staff.

- 16.75 Mr T Grice queried the process for feeding back to staff the issues picked up during learning walks. The process was explained, concluding that any discussions would ultimately form part of the staff appraisal process.

Further discussion followed regarding punctuality and attendance, with the VP T&L confirming that there has been some difference in the management of poor attendance in comparison to poor punctuality. This has resulted in less satisfactory outcomes in the improvement of punctuality which has been discussed amongst SMT and the Heads of Department, with suggestions for changing the methods to deal with poor punctuality of a minority of students, including the use of parental texts, as with absence.

- 16.76 Ms J Collier queried whether there would be any merit in seeking external verification that the college was heading in the right direction towards becoming outstanding. The Principal agreed that it may be useful and could be undertaken as a peer review. The suggestion was noted for possible consideration by SMT.

STUDENT GOVERNORS

- 16.77 Although neither were present at the meeting, the Chair thanked Ms Sibanda and Mr Wilding for their time in office as Student Governors, and wished them every success in the future.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- 16.78 The next meeting, a special Corporation meeting, is to be held on Monday 26th September 2016 at 5.30 pm.

The meeting remained quorate

Signed _____  _____

Date _____ 26th September 2016 _____