

Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of the College Corporation held on Thursday 3 December 2009 at 7.00 pm

Present: Mr C Wiper (Chairman)
Mrs S Barnes
Mr D Bihari
Mr P Davison
Mr T Fisher
Mr T Haylett
Mr M Ithurralde
Cllr E Lister
Mrs L Lyle
Prof L Oglesby
Mr M Shaw
Mr A Warman
Mr A Wilson

In Attendance: Mr G Barker
Mrs A Blackburn
Dr S D Hunnisett
Mr T M Loftus
Mr G Brookes (Clerk)

09/64 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs H Barron, Mrs G Laws and Mr N Waterfall-Brown and were **accepted** by the Board.

The Clerk informed the Members that Ms S Robinson had moved from the area and had submitted her resignation as a Member of the Corporation.

09/65 Minutes of the Meeting held on

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2009 were **accepted** as a true record by the Board and were signed by the Chairman.

09/66 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

09/67 Outstanding References

There were no outstanding references.

09/68 Urgent Business

No urgent business was raised.

09/69 Publications Distributed since the Last Meeting.

The Clerk referred to the QESFC Newsletter, Autumn 2009, the LSIS Newsletter Issue 11 and the details of the Annual Conference 2010.

09/70 Governor Training – Safeguarding and Safety

70.1 Mr Wiper introduced this important topic and Mr Fisher stated that everyone would be aware of the recent, high-profile, cases involving the vulnerability of children and young people and the introduction of further statutory requirements to safeguard them. The College needs to discharge its responsibilities effectively and Ofsted is becoming increasingly involved in these matters and this presentation is to inform Members how the College is responding to the challenges.

- 70.2 Mrs Blackburn referred to the College's proposed Safeguarding Policy, the Government's overarching document 'Every Child Matters' and to the revised framework to be used by Ofsted. In future safeguarding and safety will feature centrally in Ofsted's grading.
- 70.3 Mrs Blackburn emphasised the governing body's responsibilities and the policy guidelines and stated that she is the designated member of staff with specific responsibility for safeguarding issues and that Cllr E Lister is the designated governor with such responsibility. Principal Tutors Chris Watson and John Beilby are also designated Safeguarding Officers.
- 70.3 It was also stated that the College is consulting students about safety issues and how safe they feel in College. For example, students were asked for their views at the last Student Committee.
- 70.4 Referring to the Safeguarding Policy Mr Fisher emphasised the following aspects:
- a. The governors' responsibilities.
 - b. The role of the designated governor
 - c. The policy and procedures will be submitted annually to the Local Authority Safeguarding Children Officer for approval.
 - d. An annual review of the policy and an annual Safeguarding report will be submitted to the Board for approval.
 - e. Eventually all staff will need to register, perhaps within a period of five years, and governors will be part of the process. All staff need to be trained and CRB checked.
- 70.5 Mr Fisher considered that e-safety is very important and that the College is doing all it can to inform students and staff of the issues and the steps to take to stay safe. The contents of the draft e-safety guidelines for students and staff were considered at length.
- 70.6 Points raised in discussion included:
- a. The E-Safety Policy and guidelines would be reviewed on a regular basis.
 - b. Students considered that the College does communicate the issues to them and that they do feel secure.
 - c. Some social networks are blocked within the College.
 - d. A training session on 'Safeguarding' is to be run at Hartlepool College and QE governors would be welcome. Those wishing to attend should contact Mr Fisher.

Action Mr Fisher/Members

The Board **approved** the Safeguarding Policy and the e-safety policy and guidelines and the approach adopted by the College.

09/71 Committee Reports

71.1 Finance and Resources Committee

Mr Wiper referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2009, which had been reported upon at the last meeting, and reported verbally on the meeting held on 16 November 2009. He pointed out that most of the items were to be covered later at this meeting.

The Board **accepted** the report and the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2009.

71.2 Audit Committee

Mrs Lyle reported verbally on the meeting held on 19 November 2009 and in particular to:

- a. The Internal Auditor's report on compliance arrangements regarding: data protection and freedom of information act (limited assurance); software licensing (adequate assurance) and strategic planning (substantial assurance).
- b. The Internal Audit Annual Report which Bentley Jennison summarised overall as good.
- c. The Financial Statements and Regularity Audit Report – given an unqualified audit opinion with no improvement observations to make.
- d. Annual Report on the Work of the Audit Committee.
- e. Annual Report and Financial Statements Report which had already been agreed by the Finance and Resources Committee.

All of these are to be covered separately later in the agenda.

The Board **accepted** the report.

71.3 Student Committee

Mr Davison referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2009 and stated that, even by its normal standards, this has been an excellent meeting. He pointed out in particular the aspect of student safety. Students did not feel threatened in and around the College but there was concern over the traffic on nearby roads. Also, there had been a splendid presentation on sporting initiatives and further promising plans submitted by the Student Association.

The Board **accepted** the report and the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2009.

71.4 Remuneration Committee

Mr Wiper referred to the minutes of the Remuneration Committee held on 12 October 2009 and stated that the amounts per annum for Mr Loftus and Mrs Wilson in Ref 08/09 should read £55,218.

Appropriate payments were being actioned and the Board **accepted** the report and the amended minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2009.

71.5 Curriculum and Standards Committee

Cllr Lister referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2009 and in particular to the splendid performance report (Ofsted) which was a testament to the hard work and dedication of the staff and the students. She also noted that the Student Members were not able to attend the meeting and that their presence at future meetings would be of considerable value.

The Board **accepted** the report and the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2009.

71.6 Search Committee

Mr Wiper referred to the minutes of the Search Committee meeting held on 14 September 2009 which he had reported upon at the last meeting. He also reported verbally on a meeting held on 19 November 2009 and stated that relevant items: Appointment of Members and Legal Designation were to be covered later at this meeting.

The Board **accepted** the report and the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2009.

09/72 College Performance Reports

72.1 KPI 2009 Report : Examination Results

Mr Barker referred to the Raw and Value Added results for 2008/09 and pointed out that as the results from the schools improve the capacity to add value at the College decreases. He re-iterated how the added value is determined and that it is an important measure of performance.

The improvement targets and action plan 2009 were explained.

The Board **accepted** the report.

72.2 KPI 2009 Report : Student Numbers

Dr Hunnisett referred to the Enrolment and Average Class Sizes 2009/10 report and in particular to the Summary Points eg Year 1 (16-18) enrolments the highest ever (increased by 81) and that the additional space used in the Arts Centre is essential.

The Board **accepted** the report.

72.3 KPI 2009 Report : Views of Year 2 Students (ALIS)

Mr Barker referred to the Views of the Year 2 Student (ALIS) report which are compared with the ALIS cohort which now exceeds 100,000. The attitudes expressed by QE students are outstanding and are significantly above the national ALIS cohort for every question.

Points raised in discussion included:

- a. The overcrowding in the library which is a perennial problem locally, and nationwide, receives constant attention by the staff.
- b. In the attitude to subjects question, no A2 subjects were significantly below the national ALIS average.

Mr Barker also covered the new improvement targets and action plan for 2009/10.

The Board **accepted** the report.

72.4 KPI 2009 Data : Subject Achievement Data

Mr Barker referred to the Subject Achievement data November 2009 which provided details of achievements for all subjects at all levels and the targets and grades (where applicable) for this year and next year.

Again splendid results had been gained and the Board **accepted** the report.

72.5 Student Activities Report

Mr Davison referred to the report as '17 pages of good news' and said that no one event could be singled out in a list of events that were excellent, as the College has come to expect each year.

The Board **accepted** the report.

72.6 Aims of the Student Association

Mr Davison referred to the Student Association Action Plan 2009/10 and noted how the emphasis had changed from year to year and asked Thoryn and Dale to explain the four areas in more detail.

The Board congratulated the Student Association on its initiative and **accepted** the report.

09/73 Legal Designation as a Sixth Form College

- 73.1 Mr Fisher reminded Members that the matter of Legal Designation had been outlined at the last meeting and that a decision would be needed at today's meeting.
- 73.2 He referred to the SFCF position paper on designation (September 2009) and to the DCSF letter 'Designation of Sixth Form Colleges' (undated) and pointed out aspects of particular relevance to QE.
- 73.3 'SFCs will remain independent, corporate, institutions with governance arrangements much as they are at present. However, they will be in a new relationship with their home local authority.'
- 73.4 Points raised in discussion included:
- a. The indications that SFCF were now more positive towards designation but not completely committed.
 - b. There appears to be no significant advantage in becoming a designated SFC rather than a GFE college.
 - c. The NORVIC group are in favour of designation.
 - d. If designation is approved it would be 2 years before the college could opt out.
 - e. The local authority could de-commission provision at a college.
 - f. Transport and the cross-border situation needs careful consideration.
 - g. The quality of provision and the students achievements are sound marketing factors and as QE is the only SFC in Darlington this is likely to be advantageous.
 - h. If designation is not agreed QE may not feel part of the SFC 'family'.
- 73.5 Mr Wiper proposed that the Board should give approval to QE being designated as a Sixth Form College and that the College's response be forwarded to DCSF by 21 December 2009. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Lister and **approved** unanimously by the Board.

Action Mr Wiper/Mr Fisher

09/74 Capital Project

- 74.1 Mr Wiper explained that the project appeared to be moving towards an acceptable proposal in the New Year and asked the Principal to give more details. Referring to the AA Projects minutes of meetings held on 3 November and the agenda for 24 November 2009 Mr Fisher stated that:
- a. There was a clear indication of the use of the Arts Centre consistent with the needs of QE and a workable model for community use.
 - b. AA Projects were working on plans and costs and these would be presented to the Board. **Action Mr Fisher**
 - c. Depending on the political situation we could be in a position to have increased use of the Arts Centre by September 2010.
 - d. The Finance and Resources Committee are already considering the running costs of the project.

The Board **accepted** the report.

09/75 Personnel Reports

75.1 Staff Salaries 2009/10

Mr Fisher stated that the salaries for Support Staff had been agreed nationally. They would receive 1.5% from 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 rising to 2.3% from 1 April 2010 to 31 August 2010. This is equivalent to 1.84% overall for the year and the overall amount is within the approved budget figure.

The salaries for Teaching Staff have not yet been agreed.

The Board **accepted** the report.

75.2 Personnel Report

Mr Fisher referred to the Personnel Report dated 16 November 2009 which included appointments (7), leavers (2) and recruitment in progress.

The Board **accepted** the report.

09/76 Premises Report

Mr Fisher referred to the Premises Report – December 2009. The College has continued to concentrate on maintenance and essential re-decoration during the Autumn Term. Also, a new security system and cameras are close to being fully operational.

The Board **accepted** the report.

09/77 Finance Reports

77.1 Internal Auditor's Annual Report for 2009

77.1.1 Mrs Lyle referred to the BJ report for the year ended 31 July 2009 which had been considered by the Audit Committee and recommended to the Board for approval. She pointed out in particular:

- a. The Assurance Statement (Section 2.2) in which the opinion of the adequacy and effectiveness of QE's arrangements for Governance, Risk Management and control was assessed as positive. This is the best assessment that can be given.
- b. The bench marking data (Section 2.7).
- c. The Assurance Map in which Data Protection/Freedom of Information compliance was assessed as limited. However, this is currently the case in most places since the new regulations were introduced and QE is addressing the issue.
The Operational Assurances: Six of the seven areas were 'good' and one 'adequate'.

The Board **accepted** the Internal Auditor's Annual Report for 2008-09 report.

77.2 Financial Statements Audit Management Letter for 2009

77.2.1 Mrs Lyle referred to the KPMG Audit Highlights and Management letter dated 6 November 2009 and pointed out in particular:

- a. In Section Two the largest change in the figures from the previous year was an increase in the pension liability of £660k. The reason for this was explained and is outside the College's control.
- b. There were no improvement observations to make.

- c. There were no corrected audit differences to record.

The Board **accepted** the Financial Statements Audit Highlights and Management letter dated 6 November 2009.

77.3 Financial Statements Audit: Teachers' Pensions Letter

Mr Loftus referred to the KPMG letter dated 26 June 2009 entitled: 'Opinion on Contributions made in Capita Teachers' Pensions by QESFC' in which the auditors considered that the relevant contributions for the year ended 31 March 2009 have been paid in accordance with the rules.

The Board **accepted** the letter.

77.4 Financial Statements Audit: Letter of Representation

Mr Loftus referred to the letter to KPMG dated 3 December 2009 and stated that it is the normal letter raised at this time of year.

The Board **approved** the letter and **agreed** that it be signed by the Chairman and the Principal. **Action Mr Wiper/Mr Fisher**

77.5 Financial Statements Audit: Confirmation of Audit Independence

Mr Loftus referred to the KPMG letter dated 4 November 2009 which confirmed KPMG's independence as auditors for the College.

The Board **accepted** the letter.

77.6 Risk Management

Mr Loftus referred to the Risk Management Annual Report for 2008/09 and in particular to:

- a. The assurance to Members that adequate measures are taken to ensure that the Corporation's duties are discharged (Para 1.3).
- b. The Internal Audit thematic review of the College's Risk Maturity found it to be 'Risk Defined'. Also, the Internal Audit Report concluded: 'the college has an established risk management framework in place. The Risk Register is populated from the Strategic Objectives which is considered best practice.'
- c. The action plan for 2009/10.

The Board **approved** the Risk Management Report for 2008/09.

77.7 Financial Management and Control Evaluation (FMCE)

Mr Loftus referred to the FMCE return, which had been signed by the Principal on 6 November 2009, and in particular to:

- a. The Summary of Grades (Part 1) and how they had been assessed (2 'outstanding' and 2 'good').
- b. The Improvement Plan (Part 2).

The Board **approved** the return.

77.8 Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year ending 31 July 2009

Mr Loftus referred to the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2009 which had been considered by the Finance and Resources Committee and the Audit Committee and recommended by both for approval by the Board. He pointed out in particular:

- a. The narrative pages (2-8) which contain the Members' report.
- b. The Statements of Corporate Governance and Control and of Members' Responsibilities.

- c. The requirement that the Chairman and Principal are to sign pages 9,15 and 16 as indicated.
- d. The independent auditors' reports.
- e. The figures from page 19 onwards have been audited. It was pointed out that the Net Pension Liability for 2009 is £1230k compared to £570k last year (page 22) and that this change is outside the College's control.

The Board **approved** the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2009.

77.9 Finance Report 1 August to 31 October 2009

Mr Loftus referred to the Finance Report for the 3 months to 31 October 2009 and reported that the College remains in a healthy financial position.

The Board **accepted** the report.

77.10 Annual Report on the Work of the Audit Committee

Mrs Lyle referred to the Annual Report which had been considered by the Audit Committee and recommended to the Board for approval. She pointed out in particular the conclusion that:

“The Audit Committee considers that the Governing Body's responsibilities have been satisfactorily discharged.”

The Board **approved** the report.

77.11 Re-Appointment of Auditors

Mrs Lyle reported that the Audit Committee considered that the auditors had provided satisfactory service throughout the past year and recommended that the Board gave approval for their re-appointment, namely:

- a. KPMG as the Financial Statements and Regularity Auditors.
- b. Bentley Jennison as the Internal Auditors.

The Board **approved** the re-appointment of both auditors.

09/78 Governance Issues

78.1 Appointment of Corporation Members

78.1.1 The Clerk reported that there are three vacancies for Members: one Parent Member and two Independent Members and that the advertisements had been placed in the local paper, in the College Newsletter and on the College website.

78.1.2 At a special meeting of the Search Committee held on 19 November 2009 two recommendations were made for Board approval:

- a. Mr Chris McEwan be appointed as a Parent Member effective for 1 January 2010.
- b. Mr Tim Grant, the newly-appointed principal (designate) of Darlington College be appointed as an Independent Member effective from 1 January 2010.

78.1.3 Mr Wiper and Mr Fisher gave details of the two nominees and expressed their confidence that they would bring valuable skills, experience and knowledge to the Board.

The Board **approved**:

- a. The appointment of Mr Chris McEwan as a Parent Member of the College Corporation for a period of two years from 1 January 2010.
- b. The appointment of Mr Tim Grant as an Independent Member for a period of four years for 1 January 2010.

78.1.4 The Clerk reported that as a result of the advertisements four people had expressed an interest in becoming governors and that he proposed to write to them to obtain their personal details and relevant information.

The Board **agreed** the proposal.

Action Mr Brookes

78.1.5 There will also be vacancies for Members on various committees and it was proposed that, subject to their agreement:

- a. Mr McEwan be appointed to serve on the Audit Committee.
- b. Mr Grant be appointed to serve on the Curriculum and Standards Committee.

The Board **approved** the proposals.

78.1.6 The Clerk pointed out that before 31 August 2010 the Board will need to consider the appointment/re-appointment of the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Corporation.

Also, the current terms of office of two Members come to an end on that date and Members were asked to let the Chairman, Principal or the Clerk know of any potential governors they could recommend.

Action Members

78.1.7 Mr Wiper raised the subject of the number of the Members on the Board of the College Corporation. At present there are 18 Members and he suggested that if this were increased to 20 (the maximum the College could have) the number of Independent Members would increase from 10 to 12. This would enable the Board to benefit from an even broader range of backgrounds and experience. The figure for quoracy would remain at 8.

The Board **approved** increasing the membership of the College Corporation from 18 to 20 to be effective from 1 September 2010.

78.2 Declarations of Members' Interests

The Clerk reported that he had up-to-date details of the majority of Members and would contact the remainder in the near future. **Action Mr Brookes**

78.3 Governors' Training Events

The Clerk informed Members of two training events to be held locally in February 2010 (Governor Induction) and June 2010 (Quality Control) and asked anyone wishing to have further details to contact him.

He also referred to a suggestion by Darlington College's Board to hold a joint training session with QE on developments in the Machinery of Government initiative and the political dimension of the 16-18 strategy. The Search Committee recommended that a joint session in January 2010 would be preferable.

The Board **approved** the recommendation and agreed that the Clerk liaise with Darlington College. **Action Mr Brookes**

09/79 Urgent Business Raised Under Ref 09/68

No urgent business was raised.

09/80 Confidentiality

Details of the Capital Project and the Personnel Report are confidential.

09/81 Date and Agenda for the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held on Thursday 18 March 2010 at 7.00 pm.

In the absence of Sarah Robinson and Nigel Waterfall-Brown, Mr Wiper expressed his gratitude for their contributions as Members of the Board and Corporation Committees and wished them both well for the future.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.20 pm.