

THE SOUTH DOWNS COLLEGE CORPORATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 5.45 pm on Thursday 25 March 2010 in the Committee Room

Present: Andrew Turner (Chairman), Frederick Allgood, Richard Andrews, Gwen Blackett, Joshua Bulleyment, Yvonne Elliott, Sandra Jowett, Stephenie Linham, Donna Munday, Laxmi Neave, Michael Oakes (Principal), Madeleine Wade, Tony Welch

Apologies: Patricia Thompson

In Attendance: John Manterfield, Clerk to the Corporation
Julius Mach, Head of Finance
Susan Grantham, Minuting Secretary
For Item 1 (Minute 821) The Curriculum Quality Leadership Team:
Richard Barlow, Lorraine Bettsworth, Rebecca Cutler,
Ann Gorecki, Chris Harpum, Liz Norland

821. Standards and Quality

Self Assessment Report

(Doc. C10/08 was circulated with the agenda)

The Principal introduced his six senior colleagues who made up the Curriculum Quality Leadership Team. The team met fortnightly as an operational group and with the Principal twice-termly on strategic issues. The team have a significant role throughout the College on quality and not just for the College's Self-Assessment Report. Richard Barlow, quality manager, has responsibilities for the team of senior lecturer teaching mentors; Chris Harpum and Liz Norland are the two Faculty Heads; Rebecca Cutler, Head of Curriculum for Foundations for Learning, is also closely involved in teacher training; Lorraine Bettsworth, Head of Curriculum for Beauty, Hairdressing and Holistic Therapies, has particular knowledge of vocational education and qualifications (28% of students follow A Levels and the remainder follow a very broad vocational curriculum); Ann Gorecki, senior lecturer and teaching mentor, managed the College's Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in health and care, as well as having a nursing background. The College's core business was educating learners from the age of 14, and was judged on the quality of the curriculum and learning experience. The Self-Assessment Report was the most important report that the College produced annually. Governors as well as all staff need to understand and share in the report and to know what was good and what needs improvement. The Principal invited governors to ask questions.

Richard Barlow noted the presentations would explain the thinking behind the grades awarded. The document conveys rigour and drives forward development. The 2008/2009 course and curriculum reports used the old Ofsted system using five key questions. The College Self-Assessment Report presented followed Ofsted's new Common Inspection Framework and the 2009/10 course and curriculum reports would follow that same format and course managers and Heads of Curriculum had been receiving relevant training.

[5.50 pm – Sandra Jowett joined the meeting.]

Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework listed the main grading areas: Overall Effectiveness, Capacity to Improve, Outcomes for Learners; Quality of Provision; Leadership and Management. Each had sub-headings and key questions were emboldened within the report. The grading of Overall Effectiveness and Capacity to Improve were a consequence of the other three grades. Within Leadership and Management two new areas of Safeguarding, and Equality and Diversity were of particular importance. (The CQLT's presentation is attached).

Outcome for Learners - Grade 1 – Outstanding - based on the 5 areas of Every Student Matters – Enjoy and Achieve; Achieve Economic and Social Well-Being; Feel Safe; Make a Positive Contribution.

Quality of Provision – Grade 1 – Outstanding

How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?

Sub-headings:

How effectively does the College's provision meet the needs and interests of users?

How effectively does the College use partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs?

How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them attain their learning goals?

Leadership and Management – Grade 1 - Outstanding

Sub-headings: Ambition and Prioritisation; Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity;

User Engagement; Self-Assessment; Value for Money

Overall Effectiveness – Grade 1

Capacity to Improve – Grade 1

The outcome of these two grades was based on the other 3 areas.

Annex A of the report represented the Development Plan. Pages A-1 - A-2 covered cross-College improvements:

- Student quality review groups

- Achievement and high grades of AS Level learners

- Self-assessment data system

- Safeguarding and Equality and Diversity in teaching and learning

Pages A-3-33 contained extensive curriculum area targets and specific targets for A Levels.

During the course of the presentations, the team responded to a range of questions from members including:

Partnerships – in response to Donna Munday, Ann Gorecki advised 5/6 employers were involved within Health and Care (Nursery Managers, residential and nursing home owners). Lorraine Bettsworth's area of Hair and Beauty included local spas and clinics, hairdressers, retail outlets. Richard Barlow advised the Engineering Project Day on 25/26 March was attended by 15 employers who effectively head-hunt the best students. Yvonne Elliott referred to her breakfast meetings for 28 employers within Sport and Public Services.

Stephenie Linham stated she learned a lot about the College from the report. Yvonne Elliott noted the report shows excellence but is only the tip of the iceberg. The Principal highlighted the broad range of abilities of over 5000 full-time students from those who can barely read or write to those who go on to Balliol to read classics, and several thousand part-time learners.

Responding to Freddie Allgood, the Principal advised that where achievement is poor the course manager, Head of Curriculum, Head of Faculty and the Principal are involved to discuss the best way forward. Liz Norland advised that the College classes 'poor' as anything that falls below the national average, e.g. if the benchmark was 89% the College would consider 87% as poor.

Donna Munday noted AS computing had jumped from 5% to 41% and it was explained the percentages referred to high grades A-B, where the national average was 27% and improvements had been made by changing the staff managing the course.

Chris Harpum referred to the importance of 'value-added' and the College measures the distance each student has travelled from entry to when they leave.

Gwen Blackett asked how students are treated who are good with their hands but not at examinations. Richard Barlow gave an example of Catering students struggling with literacy and developments made by the tutor which are now recognised by the board and seen as

good practice. The Principal added that students receive three interviews to ensure they are on the appropriate level of course – initial interview, course confirmation, and a one to one tutor review in October when there is still an opportunity to move programme. The College Secretary advised that, in agreement with the Boards, additional support is supplied to a significant number of exam candidates in the form of scribes/readers/additional time.

Andrew Turner asked if the Team ever have any self-doubt. Richard Barlow advised the report was 100% accurate and honest and areas are flagged up for improvement. Rebecca Cutler advised the College is never complacent and always looking to improve. That is embedded in the ethos and staff enjoy working at the College.

Tony Welch regarded much success had been achieved based on the College being financially very secure and asked what the future held. The Principal agreed the future was going to be different and governors had already been made aware of the impact of allocation cuts on adult education. South Downs is in a strong financial position without any debt but not immune and efficiencies would be required.

Stephenie Linham advised she had attended a recent meeting of Local Authorities in the Birmingham area and the excellence of South Downs College had been remarked upon.

On the proposal of the Chairman

- (i) the presentation by the Curriculum Quality Leadership Team was RECEIVED.
- (ii) the College's Self Assessment Report (Doc.C10/08) was RECEIVED

[The Curriculum Quality Leadership Team left the meeting at 6.55 pm.

[Gwen Blackett left the meeting at 6.55 pm.]

822. Minutes

(previously circulated and with the agenda)

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2010 were RECEIVED whereupon the Chairman SIGNED the minutes.

823. Audit Committee

- (i) Minutes of meeting 11 March 2010
(Doc.C10/09 was circulated with the agenda)

Donna Munday reported it had been a busy evening. The Committee had received a number of internal audit reports from Gill Livingstone, Client Manager of RSM Tenon. Six reports received substantial assurance with one merits attention recommendation about access by students to the College's Academic Network and this was under periodic review by management. Two follow-up reports noted good progress, the highest assurance. The College could not wish for a better set of reports. Gill Livingstone would be issuing one last report – the Internal Auditor's Annual Report. The Audit Committee had thanked Gill Livingstone and her team for all their hard work. Gill thanked the Head of Finance and his team; and stated she will miss South Downs, her best College; she enjoyed being interrogated by the Audit Committee and in future will not have a lot of best practice to pass to other clients.

The remainder of the evening had been spent listening and considering presentations made by two internal audit firms.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2010 were RECEIVED.

- (ii) Appointment of Internal Audit Service Providers

Donna Munday reminded members the current internal auditors had recently merged with the financial statements and regularity auditors and the Audit Committee was

required to appoint a new internal audit service. The Committee (11.3.10) received presentations and had discussions with the two firms who had submitted tenders – MacIntyre Hudson of London and Mazars of Southampton. She outlined the rationale for the Audit Committee’s recommendation to appoint Mazars, based on accessibility (MacIntyre Hudson, based in London, with the possibility of a one week intensive approach to do all audits), tender documentation and presentation tailored to South Downs College, costs - 25% less expensive, more proactive approach, and confidence about future changes. Mazars were a huge international organisation and had invited the College to approach any of their clients for references. In February they received the Accountancy Age Finance 360 Award for best service provider. The Committee’s decision had been unanimous having scored Mazars higher than MacIntyre Hudson.

The Principal declared an interest as Mazars provide an audit service to the University of Portsmouth, where he is a governor.

On the recommendation of the Audit Committee (11.3.10) it was AGREED unanimously that Mazars LLP be appointed as internal audit service provider with effect from 1 April 2010 for the term of 5 years and 4 months (to 31 July 2015) and that the Principal be authorised to sign Letters of Engagement.

(iii) Appointment of Financial Statements and Regularity Auditor

On the recommendation of the Audit Committee (20.1.10) it was AGREED unanimously that RSM Tenon be appointed as financial statements and regularity auditors with effect from 1 April 2010 and the Principal be authorised to sign Letters of Engagement.

824. Finance

Revenue and Capital Budget 2009-2010

(Document C10/10 was circulated with the agenda)

The Principal referred to Page 11 of the report which expanded on page 2. Column 3 (the current year’s allocation) was split into separate funding streams and money could no longer be moved between streams – 16-18 (85% of the college funding); adult learner responsive (adult education); adult employer responsive (Train to Gain), Apprenticeships; ALS (additional learning support for students). The 16-18 target was 5477. The Standard Learner Number referred to the measure of volume of activity based on an average of 450 guided learning hours. Students studying 4 A Levels or a BTEC and an additional A Level could have a rating of 1.3 of a student and there was a cap of 1.7. The College’s average rating was 1.4. The base rate of funding across the country was £2920. The 16-18 allocation was some £24 million. The allocation for adult learner responsive of just over £4million was £0.5 million overspent and needed to be brought back into line. The adult employer responsive allocation was £427,134; Apprenticeships had not taken off to the extent anticipated and ALS was just under £1.5 million. The total allocation was £31,009,429. Column 4 indicated the expected year end figure of £31,640,786 and needed pulling back.

The front page covered future planning. The reduction in funding was 10% and the number of redundancies would be small. Page 2 showed an income of £35.6 million with £31 million from the LSC. The paybill was £26.5 million. There was an in-year surplus and retained surplus after expenditure on additional equipment, extra computers and the North West Building 2. The retained surplus would not be high but figures still reflected robust solvency. In response to Laxmi Neave, the Principal confirmed any funding allocation not spent on apprenticeships would be clawed back and affect the following year’s allocation.

On the proposal of the Chairman, the financial and enrolment monitoring reports were RECEIVED.

825. Staffing

Staffing Report

(Doc.C10/11 was circulated with the agenda)

The Principal advised the report was previously produced for the Finance and Employment Committee and the Chairman considered it was a useful document for all governors. He offered to take any questions. The Chairman noted the report included many staff on fractional and permanent part-time contracts.

826. Havant Academy

The Principal reported he had come from a meeting of the Project Steering Group, (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and their consultants, Tribal, and Hampshire County Council (HCC)). South Downs College was lead sponsor and HCC the co-sponsor. A first-rate principal designate had been appointed, who was currently head of Neville Lovett School. In the last ten days the funding agreement had been agreed with the DCSF in order to reach the Minister before the dissolution of Parliament. The main complication related to extraordinary arrangements regarding leases at Staunton Community Sports College and the lawyers Blake Laphorn had been tough on the Principal's behalf. He made clear that the Academy will not take on any liabilities that the school may have. Cllr David Kirk, leader of HCC, had signed the funding agreement the previous day. The Chairman had been helpful in discussions.

The Principal proposed to make a presentation at the June or July meeting. Andrew Turner and Donna Munday had kindly agreed to be Trustees (members) and the College's two Heads of Faculties had been invited to be members. The Academy was a public sector solution with all new governors who were educationalists. Staunton Community Sports College was a failing school with a lack of real aspirational leadership and the alternative was to close it down. The Academy would give the children in the community the opportunities they deserve. English would be a specialism and there would be extended services for adults. Posts for the Senior Leadership Team and Vice Principal had been advertised and appointments would be made after Easter. The Principal will chair the governing body but did not see the role as long term. He looked forward to the opening of the Academy, subject to agreement, on 1 September. Skills and staff from South Downs could be involved but there would be sufficient leadership in-house. The DCSF were very enthusiastic when they heard South Downs wanted to be involved, and a very good County Council was involved.

The Principal asked governors for their support of the Academy so that the funding agreement could be forwarded to the Minister and Secretary of State the following day. In response to Freddie Allgood he advised that enrolments were some ten down on the same period last year but second choice had risen significantly. Ofsted had inspected the school two weeks ago. There was much to be done by the new principal and he would give her every support.

The Corporation expressed their unanimous support for the Havant Academy.

827. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed for 17 June 2010 at 5.45pm.

[The meeting was declared closed at 7.40 pm.]