

THE SOUTH DOWNS COLLEGE CORPORATION

Minutes of meeting held at 5.45 pm on Thursday 31 March 2011 in the Committee Room

Present: Andrew Turner (Chairman), Frederick Allgood, Gwen Blackett, Ian Child, Roshni Joshi, Stephenie Linham, Laxmi Neave, Michael Oakes (Principal), Peter Rhodes, Tony Welch, Sam Wilkinson

Apologies: Donna Munday, Patricia Thompson

In Attendance: Curriculum Quality Leadership Team:
Richard Barlow Quality Manager,
Chris Harpum Head of Faculty Arts and Sciences,
Liz Norland Head of Faculty Business and Community,
Lorraine Bettsworth Head of Beauty Hairdressing and Holistic Therapies,
Rebecca Cutler Head of Foundations for Learning,
Ann Gorecki Senior Lecturer and Head of Centre of Vocational Excellence.
John Manterfield, Clerk to the Corporation
Susan Grantham, Minuting Secretary

The Chairman welcomed governors and the Curriculum Quality Leadership Team.

886. Self-Assessment Report (SAR) (Doc. C11/12 was distributed with the agenda)

The Principal noted that he had first introduced his senior colleagues on the Curriculum Quality Leadership Team (CQLT) to the governors last March to make a presentation of the SAR. The SAR was the most important document that the College produces and again showed the College remained 'outstanding'. Accordingly it was not anticipated that the College would be inspected in the near future. 'Capacity to Improve' was tremendously important to keep a foot on the accelerator in terms of quality and areas where improvement is required. A couple of years ago he had established the CQLT, a very important group who work extremely well at an operational level and to the Principal on every aspect of quality throughout the organisation. The quality of the student learning experience is the College's core business and outstanding leadership and management and excellent teaching and learning. He introduced the team and their management responsibilities which ensure quality right across the piece – vocational, A Levels, students with learning needs. Every teacher has a responsibility for quality. Quality assurance has to be maintained and developed and the SAR is central to that process and an important document for governors. The Principal invited governors to ask questions both during and at the end of the presentations.

Richard Barlow thanked the Principal for inviting the team to present the report. The 2009/2010 report differed in that it contained coloured graphics, more extensive contents/data and an emphasis on evaluative language, all the key evidence to prove our SAR and consistently driven to improve what we do. It is the final stage of the SAR cycle which begins at course level, which fits into the curriculum report based on the new Ofsted Common Inspection Framework questions. Curriculum SARs are presented to the quality panel (Heads of Faculty and Quality Manager). Heads of Curriculum then meet individually with the Principal who approves the final SAR and confirms gradings. Richard Barlow then writes the complete College SAR and all CQLT team members play a role in that process. The team would focus on the main grades section by section and he outlined the format of the presentations, a copy is attached to the minutes and additional notes are recorded below.

Outcome for Learners – Grade 1 - Outstanding

- Enjoy and Achieve – Richard Barlow emphasised excellent success rates with overall rates up and above the national average; and for 16-18 learners studying AS and A levels, value added on vocational courses, success rates for LDD learners, a narrowing of gaps (further explained in the Equality and Diversity section of the report) and very high levels of enjoyment by learners. The A Level Information Service (ALIS) graph on page 18 indicated

that learners rate South Downs consistently more highly than learners in similar institutions. Issues for development/improvement related to retention of 19+ learners; AS level achievement; AS and A level high grades and valued added.

- Achieve Economic and Social Well Being – Lorraine Bettesworth reported and noted prestigious work placements for Catering and Hospitality students at Buckingham Palace, Windsor Palace, Theatrical Make up at King's Theatre; a Business Academy established for 2009-10 with 24 entries and £250 awarded to the winning team. 6653 uses had been made of Careers Guidance and Advice service.
- Feel Safe – good working practices were highlighted including visitors' policy.
- Be Healthy – Ann Gorecki reported noting also the success of the learner-led displays for the Health Fair held in the Sports Hall earlier in the day including students from Hair, Beauty and Holistic therapies; Engineering; Health and Care; Sport and Public Services.
- Make a Positive contribution

In response to Roshni Joshi and the waiting time before a student could meet the counsellor, the Principal advised the College has two counsellors and he would arrange for Lucy Manning, Head of Student Services and Marketing, to investigate and respond to Roshni Joshi.

Quality of Provision – Grade 1 – Outstanding

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Richard Barlow reported that the proportion of good or outstanding teaching continues to increase and, in response to Peter Rhodes, advised that across the College there was no discernable difference between part-time and full-time teachers, as confirmed by the internal inspection which took place the week of 21 March 2011. The teacher mentor scheme to support part-time teachers was highlighted and Peter Rhodes noted his own staff considered the scheme very valuable. The Principal confirmed that one of the reasons for introducing the scheme was to support part-time staff who are mentored by an experienced teacher. Teaching and learning is the culture at South Downs and all students are part of the learning environment whether an adult offsite for literacy or the brightest student going on to read classics at Balliol.
- Needs and Interests of Learners – Richard Barlow reported.
- Partnerships; and
- Care, Guidance and Support – Chris Harpum reported.

Leadership and Management – Grade 1 - Outstanding

- Ambition and Prioritisation and
- Governance, and
- Safeguarding – Chris Harpum reported.
- Equality and Diversity – Liz Norland noted adaptations to the report following the introduction of the Act last year, the Single Equality Policy being more specific. The promotion of equality and diversity is excellent and central to the ethos of the College. The inclusive College environment is actively promoted.
- User Engagement
- Self-Assessment
- Value for Money

Capacity to Improve – Grade 1 – Outstanding

- The Development Plan – Richard Barlow reported the summary looks to the future and includes 6 cross college targets pages 115-116.

In respect of AS Level improvements, Ian Child asked whether the same targets not hit previously are being maintained. Richard Barlow explained different sets of data are used to drive targets forward using the ALIS graphs, and minimum acceptable grades. Previously the lowest acceptable grade to start was used, e.g. for GCSE a D but this creates little motivation so students are now set an aspirational grade of B. Targets are monitored at course, curriculum and faculty level.

Overall Effectiveness – Grade 1 – Outstanding

Richard Barlow reported Grade 1 across the board.

The Principal supported the presentation and confirmed grade 1 is genuinely the grade.

Ian Child commented it was an excellent and very readable report. He noted education was entering changeable times with Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) going and resources under pressure and asked about the confidence to achieve targets in a different environment. Richard Barlow responded that targets for next year are not resource-led. Systems are being refined to provide teachers with better data and skills to do their jobs and can be delivered just as well with less money.

In respect of student perception of unemployment rates, and motivation to get good grades or to bother at all, Ian Child asked whether the loss of EMA will change the way students are motivated to come to college. The Principal considered it would depend on how the college is led and managed in the future. He had given governors at the Selection Panel Meeting a briefing of what he saw to be the priorities and he would share these with all staff in the next couple of weeks. The College will have to do more with less and was now working on how they will replace EMA and prioritise. The College is funded on the number of learners and despite being told for 20 years that the demographic trend is going down, South Downs market share has increased as students want to come here because of the quality of the teaching and support staff. If the College continues to grow it will get more funding as a result of lagged numbers whereby if the College recruits students this year it will be funded for them next year. If funding is cut by 2%, and the College attracts another 120 students then this growth largely offset the cut. The Principal had put in place efficiencies this year that will affect next year and he considered it was important not to engage in 'salami-slicing' efficiencies. The successful will flourish as in the past 20 years but the College may need to prioritise more. The comprehensive culture of inclusivity and excellence must be maintained. In four years the cuts will stop. Small groups of 6-7 students won't generate much money but a holistic view is required rather than cancel classes otherwise students feel discouraged and staff are made redundant. Leadership needs to support the workforce of the College and staff must know that. People enjoy being at South Downs, in a safe environment, in lessons, working in the College, and buy into the culture. It is a major task over the next 12-18 months to ensure this philosophy and culture is maintained. The College is the largest education establishment in the county because everyone wants to be here, students, teaching and support staff.

The Chairman thanked the Curriculum Quality Leadership Team for their presentation.

[The Curriculum Quality Leadership Team left the meeting at 7.05pm and there was a short comfort break.]

On the proposal of the Chairman:

- (a) The Curriculum Quality Leadership Team's presentation was RECEIVED.
- (b) The College's Self-Assessment Report and Development Plan 2009-10 was RECEIVED.

887. Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on Thursday 3 March 2011 (previously circulated and with the agenda)

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 3 March 2011 were AGREED whereupon the Chairman SIGNED the minutes.

888. Matters Arising – Vacancy on the Corporation

The Clerk reminded members that there remained a vacancy on the Corporation. The advert in the Portsmouth News in November had resulted in one expression of interest but that person had not been eligible for appointment. The Chairman requested members to feedback any ideas to the Principal or College Secretary. He noted the letters written to the NHS had been totally unproductive and it was difficult to persuade people to volunteer their time. He proposed that the College should run another advertisement after the Easter holidays. Members

suggested various contacts including Business in the Community based in Havant; the business forum managed by the Head of Catering, Hospitality and Travel; and an advert in the College Restaurant banquet menus. The Chairman noted that the Corporation had decided against a parent governor because of the difficulty of a short term engagement with the College. The Clerk agreed to follow up the proposals.

889. Committee Appointments

(a) Audit Committee

The Clerk reported that the Audit Committee had requested the Corporation consider increasing the number of committee members from four to five with the quorum remaining at 2, and that, if agreed, then both Freddie Allgood and Tony Welch be appointed.

On the proposal of the Chairman, it was unanimously AGREED that the number of Audit Committee Members be increased from four to five with the quorum remaining at two, and that both Freddie Allgood and Tony Welch be appointed for a period of two years with effect from 31 March 2011.

(b) Staff Appeals Committee

In respect of the vacancy on the Staff Appeals Committee the Clerk advised the Committee's remit was to deal with issues of a disciplinary nature and had not met for many years.

Tony Welch offered himself for appointment which was unanimously AGREED for a period of two years with effect from 31 March 2011.

890. Audit Committee

(Doc.C11/13 was circulated with the agenda)

In the absence of Donny Munday, Chair, the College Secretary introduced the minutes noting that a number of internal audit reports had been considered. Learner Numbers reports were received for both faculties. Both received substantial assurance with one housekeeping recommendation in respect of Arts and Sciences, and two housekeeping recommendations for Business and Community. The audit of Business Continuity Planning (including the IT Disaster Recovery Plan) received substantial assurance and there had been good discussion on the two minor recommendations made. One related to the frequency of substantial testing of IT and the Committee's view, similar to its view when previously audited, was that full testing was very difficult to carry out. Graeme Clarke of Mazars had confirmed that he had no problem with the management response. The second recommendation was in respect of implementing software that would allow for automatic shutdown of the Linux server. The College had since received a suggestion about software which had been tried twice unsuccessfully. The Head of Information Services was continuing to search for suitable software. The last audit related to Financial Forecasting and substantial assurance had been received with three minor recommendations.

The Provider Financial Assurance Audit had been carried out by KPMG on behalf of the Skills Funding Agency in October and this had found some minor errors that made no difference to the funding received. The audit had covered funding claims including the Educational Maintenance Allowance and the Adult Learning Grant. The Chairman had complemented the Head of Information Services and his team on the accuracy of the data returns.

The minutes of the Audit Committee held on 10 March 2011 were RECEIVED.

891. Staffing Report

(Doc.C11/14 was circulated with the agenda)

Freddie Allgood declared an interest as one new member of staff appointed was his daughter. The Principal noted that a large part of College expenditure was staffing and the format of the report was the same as that regularly reported. He offered to take any questions.

On the proposal of the Chairman the staffing report was RECEIVED.

892. Investor in People Re-accreditation
(Doc.C11/15 was circulated with the agenda)

The College Secretary noted the frequency of re-accreditation was every three years. The College was very proud to have the standard which was made up of three principles (planning, taking action and evaluating) and ten indicators. The College had decided to be assessed for Bronze status requiring assessment against an additional 26 pieces of evidence. The Silver and Gold standards required substantially more pieces of evidence and a considerably larger amount of time. Two assessors attended the College for three full days and the College was awarded the Bronze standard and achieved more than the minimum number of indicators. Assessors met a total of 74 staff from a thorough cross-section of managers and teaching and support staff. The report notes much good practice on page 4. All staff felt valued and appreciated, very good evidence came from external sources, the mentoring team had strong support across the College, and people are proud to work at South Downs. The report looks at each of the standards and the proposals listed on pages 27-29 are all very typical of IIP development points, and the suggestion was made that the College should aspire to Silver status next time around.

The Chairman noted the huge costs involved for Silver and Gold. Peter Rhodes noted that page 8 referred to £4000 being raised for Help the Heroes and £15000 to help a student footballer with rehabilitation and considered the College may be selling itself short as The Performing Arts had raised £4000 and other lesser sums had been referred to in the Self Assessment Report. The College Secretary noted that Student Services record the monies and the SAR related to 2009/10 whereas the money raised for Help the Heroes was more recent.

On the proposal of the Chairman the report was RECEIVED.

893. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Corporation meeting was CONFIRMED as 5.45 pm on Thursday 16 June 2011.

The Chairman also noted the following meetings to be held in the Committee Room:

Selection Panel Meetings at 12.15 pm on Thursday 7 April 2011 and Tuesday 17 May 2011.
Special Meeting of the Corporation at 5.45 pm on Wednesday 25 May 2011.

894. Any Other/Urgent Business – Appointment of successor Principal

The Chairman noted 1 April was the closing date for the Principal's post and the consultants would be phoning him on Tuesday 5 April in respect of applications received. Three had been received two days ago. Navigate had been following up on quite a few more expressions of interest. He would email on any information received. In response to Gwen Blackett, he advised that governors will be provided with a list of questions to pose to candidates. The longlisting meeting on 7 April will be self-led and look at all applications to decide who governors wish to take forward. It was a challenging period but the consultants were able to exploit external networks and he was pleased with their work to date. Ian Child noted that the University of Chichester had used consultants to appoint a Vice Chancellor and they were very good at sifting the applications. From 12 applicants, they had shortlisted three.

The Principal concurred it was a major challenge for the Chairman to lead and stressed again that governors should not appoint if they are not sure.

[The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.40 pm.]