

## CENTRAL SUSSEX CORPORATION

**Minutes of a Corporation Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.  
on Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009 in FF33 Haywards Heath Campus**

**Membership:** Clive Behagg\*, Patrick Berry\*, Martin Delbridge (Vice-Chair), Leslie Edwards\*, Mark Froud, Paul Harding\*, Tony Hyams-Parish, Gill Marshman\*, Sylvia Meli\*, Adam Passingham, John Peel (Chair)\*, Mark Read\*, Zoë Richardson\*, Ramesh Shingadia and Russell Strutt.

**\* = present**

**Also in attendance:** Suri Araniyasundaran, Sue Dare, Adrian Dodwell, Maureen Kilminster, Jenny Poore and Nick Whitley (Clerk)

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1. Apologies for absence were received from Martin Delbridge, Mark Froud, Tony Hyams-Parish, Adam Passingham, Ramesh Shingadia and Russell Strutt.

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2. There were no interests to declare, apart from those relating to the re-appointment of Members of the Corporation which would be addressed at the appropriate point in the meeting.

### **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF 15TH DECEMBER 2008**

3. The Minutes were signed as a correct record.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

4. **Pensions' Task Group/10:** The Chair confirmed that a date for the first meeting of the Task Group was currently being arranged.
5. **Review of long term policies and strategy/11:** The Chair advised that he and the Clerk were reviewing what best practice for governance would suggest and therefore would carry forward this item.
6. **Letter of Representation/57:** The Chair confirmed that he had signed the letter as agreed.
7. **Final corrections to the Self assessment Report/81:** The Chair confirmed that he had approved the final corrections.

8. **Overdraft Facilities/94:** Suri Araniyasundaran confirmed that the bank had authorised the requested extension to the overdraft facility, which was being fully used.
9. **Increase in the Principal's delegated authority/96.** It was noted that the negotiations to lease temporary premises had not yet been concluded and the specific increase in the Principal's delegated authority would therefore remain in place.

Zoë Richardson joined the meeting at 5.11 p.m.

10. **Commissioning of further work and design development for Haywards Heath campus/103:** It was noted that some £12.5k of the £100k that had been approved at the last meeting had been spent; the remainder had been held back pending further advice and information from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

#### **CHAIRMAN'S ACTION**

11. The Clerk advised the meeting that there had been no Chairman's Action requiring ratification since the last meeting of the Corporation.

#### **HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT**

12. Jenny Poore introduced the report by taking the meeting through the Executive Summary. She drew attention to the increased number of reported accidents. This was particularly marked in Technology and had been discussed in some depth at the last Health & Safety Committee meeting. The Committee had concluded that there was a heightened awareness within the Faculty of the need to report all accidents. This was primarily attributable to the appointment some twelve months previously of a technician with a strong commitment to fostering good Health & Safety practices; he had the active support of his Faculty Director.
13. It was confirmed that Health & Safety issues were generally treated as a high priority within Faculties and Departments and were considered routinely at Team Leader meetings.
14. The reported incidents of "horseplay" leading to accidents was discussed; it was noted that disciplinary action had been taken in each case. It was confirmed that generally the College dealt with unruly behaviour with rigour and consistency across the College. Adrian Dodwell drew attention to the Student Support and Culture Group which met regularly and included student representatives within its membership. Addressing student behaviour was one of the topics covered in induction for all new staff.
15. **The report was received.**

#### **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

16. Jenny Poore introduced the report and drew attention to the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that had been derived from the Self Assessment

Report for Equality & Diversity. The various Equality Schemes that the College was required to have were published on the Internet and the College Intranet and were readily available.

17. It was noted that the staffing information was regularly reviewed by the Resources Committee; the data that was brought together in this report addressed many of the questions raised by the Committee and was generally felt to be extremely positive. Actions were in place to address the areas for improvement. As far as the College's approach towards students was concerned, the OFSTED inspection had provided positive external validation.
18. A meeting had taken place recently with representatives of the Bangladeshi community and learners and their families; this had been well attended and proved very constructive.

Gill Marshman joined the meeting at 5.35 p.m.

19. A successful Diversity week had been held on the Haywards Heath campus earlier that month, following a similar format to that held in Crawley and Associated campuses in December.
20. It was noted that the full-time secondment of a Community Police Support Officer to the Crawley campus was proving very successful; he had made good relationships with the students and was providing effective support to the staff. While it would be helpful if a similar arrangement could be put in place at Haywards Heath, it was recognised that the funding for the initiative was limited to Crawley.
21. **The report was received.**

## **PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE**

22. In the absence of the Principal, Suri Araniyasundaran introduced the first sections of the report, focussing on the financial position. He drew attention to the forecast deficit, which was addressed in more detail within the Report of the Finance Committee. He stressed that the 16-18 Adult Learner Responsive and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) block grant income streams had performed well and were due to meet or exceed their targets, as was the 14-16 provision. Expenditure was also under control. The areas for concern were the Demand-Led funding streams: Apprenticeships and Train to Gain, which had seen a significant downturn.
23. The budget for the current year included a target for efficiency gains of 3%; however the forecast was that only 1% would be achieved by the end of the year. The Executive's main focus was to secure the College's financial health for next year. The key to this would be to achieve headroom as outlined in the Principal's report and to develop a more flexible Human Resources (HR) model to address the fluctuations in Demand-Led income. This would be considered in more detail by the Resources Committee at its meeting in May.
24. Suri Araniyasundaran then gave an update on capital funding. He had attended a capital "summit" at the beginning of the week, at which the resignation of Mark Haysom the then Chief executive of the LSC had been announced. It had been made clear that proposed capital projects would be

prioritised (in accordance with criteria yet to be developed). A stabilisation fund was to be established to support Colleges placed in financial difficulties because their capital developments had been halted.

25. It was noted that the LSC had warned that it may not be possible to fund all the consolidated growth in 16-18 year old learners. Suri Araniyasundaran confirmed that whatever funding was provided would be in accordance with a national formula; however there was a shortfall in funding at a national level. Colleges should learn what their allocations were by early April.
26. The Chair informed the meeting that the Crawley MP, Laura Moffatt was being extremely supportive of the College; he circulated copies of a letter he had written to John Denham and Yvette Cooper stressing the importance of supporting the Central Sussex College capital development.
27. Jenny Poore then clarified the scope for developing a more flexible HR Model. She stressed that no major re-organisation was envisaged: the overall structure was fit for purpose. There were likely to be some small scale adjustments taking into account the cost of living pay awards, increments, effective staff utilisation and what proportion of the workforce was needed to be at work the whole time and what proportion should work on a call-off basis. The need to have more flexible staffing arrangements was driven by Demand-Led funding and the need to develop more short courses.
28. It was recognised that the current staff costs were largely fixed, whereas an increasing proportion of the College's income was variable. This gave a clear strategic drive to make the cost base more variable.
29. Sue Dare then introduced the section dealing with the Machinery of Government changes. She stressed that the College was well placed and well connected both within West Sussex and (because Russell Strutt was now the Chair of FE Sussex) across Sussex as a whole. It was clear that the Local Authorities needed to understand more fully their new responsibility for their part of Further Education.
30. Sue Dare drew attention to the unprecedented success nationally of the Apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. There was also political pressure on the sector to find new flexibilities of approach in response to the economic downturn. The College had submitted bids for funding to work with adults who were being made redundant and was well placed to attract support for such work.
31. She then drew attention to the recently published OFSTED report and stressed how pleased the Executive was with the outcome of the Inspection. The College had been graded as "2" (good) across the board. This was now being celebrated and publicised and would serve as a kite-mark for the College.
32. The report reflected a real vote of confidence in what the College was doing, and included strong praise for governance and management. This had been underlined by the Report on the Effectiveness of the Financial Management and Governance Framework at Central Sussex College. Although this would not be published, it represented a glowing report on the College's governance.

33. It was noted that the College's success was a tribute to the quality of its staff; any future plans to find savings in staff costs must not jeopardise the quality of the learners' experience. It was confirmed that an exercise was currently underway to identify how the required savings could be achieved, and that it would need further discussion at the next Resources Committee.
34. The Chair advised the meeting that he had been given a copy of the February Management Accounts prior to the meeting. The figures showed an improvement over the January Accounts, and thus gave comfort that the forecast was realistic and that the situation was not deteriorating further.
35. **The report was received.**

It was agreed to take the report of the Resources Committee next.

### **REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

36. Patrick Berry introduced the report. He commented that Human Resources was under control; the main focus for the Corporation should be the finances. The financial forecast was very bad news; furthermore the uncertainty over the funding for the College's capital developments may mean that a substantial proportion of the invested costs had to be written off in the current year's accounts. This was potentially very serious and could mean the College would have to seek assistance from the LSC.
37. The Corporation applauded the actions that the Executive was taking to address the financial situation. However the £750k savings referred to was the minimum that would be required; it would be essential to build in greater flexibility into the College staffing structure. The College must become much more responsive and reduce significantly the proportion of its fixed costs.
38. He drew attention to the cash flow forecast, which was the worst he could remember.
39. In summary, the financial situation was serious, but steps were being taken to address it. The Senior Team's response had been praiseworthy and this would have a positive impact over time.
40. Another risk lay with the Local Government Pension Scheme, particularly in the light of the poor performance of the Stock Market. This would be discussed by a Task & Finish Group in the near future.
41. It was noted that the bank covenants were unlikely to be met at year end; Suri Araniyasundaran confirmed that he was in communication with the banks over this. He was hoping that they would accept any write-off of the capital investment cost as an exceptional item, rather than a breach of the covenants. Nevertheless it was already evident that the renewal of any loan facilities would be subject to higher interest charges.
42. It was noted that the overall financial situation would constrain the College's ability to fund any cost of living pay increases in 2009/2010. This was a sector-wide issue; in general public sector pay settlements were likely to be low, if any increases were awarded at all.

43. Maureen Kilminster gave a brief update about the recruitment of additional learners to Apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes. Although the original targets would not be achieved, the College was on track to achieve the revised forecast. She confirmed that, locally, other Colleges were in a similar position; however the picture appeared to be different regionally, where it was said recruitment of learners had been extremely strong.
44. **The report was received.**

#### **REPORT OF THE CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

45. Clive Behagg introduced the report in Martin Delbridge's absence. He drew attention to the fact that the Committee had met shortly after oral feedback had been received from the OFSTED Inspectors but before the formal Inspection report had been released for publication. That feedback was therefore not reflected in the Committee's report.
46. The OFSTED Inspection had resulted in a splendid report and represented a major achievement by the College.
47. One of the findings that had led to considerable discussion by the Committee related to the College's lesson observation scheme. The Inspectors had found that the grades awarded for observed lessons were accurate; however they claimed that the observed lessons were not typical and based their judgement on some unannounced visits made during the Inspection. **It was agreed that it would be good practice to review the effectiveness of the College's lesson observation scheme in comparison to those used by other Colleges.**
48. Clive Behagg drew particular attention to the importance of aspirational target setting; this was at the heart of the College's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and was based on an assessment of what made outstanding Colleges outstanding.
49. The Committee commended the QIP to the Corporation, with its post inspection adjustments. As stated in the report, the Committee was confident that the Executive was planning the appropriate actions and that the College had the means to address all the points raised in the Self Assessment Report and during the Inspection.
50. It was noted that there would need to be a further debate about the College's lesson observation scheme.
51. **The report was received.**
52. **The Corporation confirmed its endorsement of the Quality Improvement Plan.**

#### **REPORT OF THE REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

53. The Chair of the Corporation advised the meeting that the Remuneration Committee had met the previous evening. Prior to this meeting he and Martin Delbridge had met to review the Principal's appraisals of the Executive Team and also the Clerk's appraisal of the Deputy Clerk. They had then carried out

an appraisal first of the Principal and then of the Clerk. The outcomes of the appraisals had been reported to the Committee.

54. The Committee had also discussed the salaries of the Senior Postholders; but this had not yet been resolved. A proposed model framework had been considered, but required further testing.
55. **The report was received.**

#### **BURGESS HILL & HAYWARDS HEATH LOCAL COMMUNITY BOARD (LCB) REPORT**

56. Sue Dare introduced the report in the absence of both Martin Delbridge and the Principal. She informed the meeting that the LCB had focussed on the growth in applications to the Haywards Heath campus for 2009/2010; there had been an unprecedented level of interest from potential students. There were already 630 accepted offers of places, although it had to be recognised that not everyone who accepted a place at this stage would enrol at the College. A further 100 interviews had been arranged. It was clear that the College was becoming the College of choice for many school leavers.
57. A number of pressure points had been identified by the staff; these included the increased requirement for individual reviews of each learner, the demands of Inspection, and the impact of increasing numbers of students while the planned facilities were only partly built. There were also significant curriculum changes that the staff were having to respond to. This was being addressed by Management.
58. It was noted that the challenge for the College was to bring in the growth in learner numbers with only a marginal increase in costs. Sue Dare advised that two of the least popular courses had been closed in favour of others; average group sizes were being increased. She advised that interviewing new students would be halted once the outstanding 100 interviews had been held.
59. It was noted that the College was now succeeding in attracting students to the Haywards Heath campus from the whole of its catchment area (the whole of Area C) and was also recruiting young people who previously would have attended Colleges outside Area C. The increased level of interest was also affected by the general economic climate.
60. The LCB had also received reports arising from the Link Scheme. Members of the LCB observed lessons, but not with a view to grading them. The operation of the Link Scheme was proving mutually beneficial to staff and to the LCB (and hence to the Corporation).
61. **The report was received.**

#### **REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE & SEARCH COMMITTEE**

62. John Peel, Paul Harding and Patrick Berry each declared an interest as their membership and positions within the Corporation were due to be considered.
63. The Chair introduced the report, reminding the meeting that Central Sussex College Corporation had been established with a core membership of six

individuals. Mike Allen, one of the six, had retired from the Corporation nearly two years ago; the terms of office for the remaining five were all due to end on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.

64. The Committee had spent time looking at succession planning in some depth.
65. Martin Delbridge, one of the remaining five, had given notice that he would not be standing for re-appointment; he had overseen the Committee's review of the candidacy of the remaining four.
66. John Peel advised the Corporation that he would be writing to Martin Delbridge to thank him for his much valued contribution to the College, on behalf of the Corporation and also personally. The significance of this contribution extended well beyond his time as a Member of Central Sussex College, to its predecessor, Haywards Heath College.
67. The Chair drew particular attention to the effective way Martin Delbridge had led and developed the work of the Burgess Hill & Haywards Heath LCB and the important role he had played in developing the Corporation's understanding and monitoring of the curriculum through the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee. He also wanted to place on record his personal appreciation of all the help Martin Delbridge had given him: a recent example of which had been the appraisal of the Principal and Senior Postholders. His analysis of the process and its outcomes had been first rate.
68. The Chair then turned to the report of the Committee's recent meeting. The Committee under the chairmanship of Martin Delbridge had considered the individual strengths and contribution of the four Corporation Members who had put themselves forward for re-appointment and had agreed to recommend to the Corporation that they all be re-appointed.
69. Martin Delbridge had also agreed to review with each of the other five (non staff or student) Members of the Corporation their views on their future role and contribution to the Corporation and the life of the College, to help the Committee in its succession planning.
70. The Committee had considered a procedure for electing the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporation; one of the major concerns was to try and avoid the need to replace both positions at the same time.
71. The Committee had also considered the implications for the LCB of Martin Delbridge ceasing to be a Member of the Corporation; the members of the LCB had been reminded that it was open to each of them to put themselves forward for consideration as a Member of the Corporation.
72. Two individuals, Russ Bryan and Philip Roberts, had been seen with a view to their being co-opted to the Resources Committee; they were both to be invited to the next meeting of that Committee.
73. It was then resolved to move to the Committee's recommendations and Paul Harding took the Chair while John Peel left the meeting at 7.05 p.m.
74. **It was agreed to re-appoint John Peel as a Member of the Corporation for a further period of four years to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.**

75. **It was agreed to re-appoint John Peel as Chair of the Corporation on an interim basis to the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2009.**

Paul Harding then left the meeting at 7.07 p.m. and John Peel returned and resumed the Chair of the meeting.

76. **It was agreed to re-appoint Paul Harding as a Member of the Corporation for a further period of four years to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.**
77. **It was agreed to appoint Paul Harding as Vice Chair of the Corporation on an interim basis to the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2009.**

Patrick Berry left the meeting at 7.08 p.m. and Paul Harding rejoined the meeting.

78. **It was agreed to re-appoint Patrick Berry as a Member of the Corporation for a further period of four years to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.**

Patrick Berry returned to the meeting at 7.09 p.m.

79. **It was agreed to re-appoint Mark Froud as a Member of the Corporation for a further period of four years to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.**

80. The proposed procedure for appointing the Chair and Vice Chair was reviewed; it was recognised that the Clerk's involvement in canvassing views was designed to introduce a measure of independence and neutrality into the proceedings.

81. **It was agreed that the procedure as circulated be adopted for the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair, subject to further research being undertaken on best practice in terms of the length of office for the Chair and Vice Chair respectively and on the role of the Vice Chair.**

82. **The following changes to the Standing Orders were approved:-**

**Para. 17.3.1 - delete "no more than two"**

**Para. 17.9.1 - add full stop after "inspection by the public", add "items (a) and (b) listed above will be" and capitalise the W in Website.**

83. **Three additional recommendations were agreed as follows:-**

**It was agreed that Clive Behagg be appointed as Chair of the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee.**

**It was agreed to re-appoint Patrick Berry as Chair of the Resources Committee.**

**It was agreed to re-appoint Mark Froud as Chair of the Audit Committee.**

## **CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

84. The Chair advised the meeting of the following:-

A response with the Clerk to a consultation Prospectus for Self Regulation in the sector.

Attendance at three meetings preparing for Inspection.

Two meetings with Members of the Inspection teams.

Three meetings for feedback from Inspection.

One Town Centre Partnership Dinner to represent the College.

One meeting of the Local Economic Action Group.

Attendance at five College Committee meetings.

Six meetings with various members of the SMT.

Attendance at the Burgess Hill & Haywards Heath LCB.

A meeting with the local MP (Laura Moffatt) about the University Centre, including a fact finding visit to Ipswich.

Appraisal meeting with Martin Delbridge.

Attendance at Gatwick Diamond Sponsorship Awards Dinner at which the College was nominated as Employer of the Year.

A meeting with Laura Moffat about the LSC capital funding position.

University of Sussex Court meeting to elect Sanjeev Bhaskar as the new Chancellor.

A very successful visit to the College by Lord Tom Young and Tim Campbell (Sir Alan Sugar's first TV Apprentice), including the opening of the Ford Maintenance Centre in the College.

85. He gave a brief résumé of developments with the University centre; essentially the Government had now recognised that the funding available could not sustain 20 new University Centres as originally proposed. The numbers of Centres quoted had been reduced to five or six; it appeared likely that the maximum would prove to be four. Brighton University was preparing a formal application, to be submitted in June 2009. There was concern that none of the partners was in a position to transfer funding from their current learner numbers to the proposed University Centre, at a time when Higher Education numbers were capped. However, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) remained strongly in support of the initiative and had commissioned a survey of existing Level 3 students in the Crawley area to ascertain the level of interest in a local University centre.

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

86. There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.29 p.m.