

## CENTRAL SUSSEX CORPORATION

### Minutes of a meeting of the Central Sussex Corporation held at 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> October at Crawley Campus

**Membership:** Mr. M. Allen\*, Mr. P. Berry\*, Mr. M. Delbridge\*, Mr. M. Froud,  
Mr. P.A. Harding\*, Miss K Nallarajah\*, Mr J A Peel (Chair)\*, Mr M Read\* and  
Dr R Strutt\*

**Also in Attendance:** Mr. S. Araniyasundaran, Mr A Dodwell, Mr K Hanworth, Mr G Papworth, Mrs  
D Redford, Mr. N.K. Whitley (Clerk) and, for part of the meeting, Mrs R  
Beesley

\* = present

#### APOLOGIES

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mr Froud.

#### DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. Mr Peel identified that he might have an interest to declare during any discussions about LearnDirect, as a non-executive Board Member of Sussex Enterprise.

#### APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT MEMBER

3. The Clerk advised the meeting that, in accordance with the recommendation of the Governance & Search Committee that the first student member be nominated by the Crawley Students Association, Miss Krishny Nallarajah (its President) had been nominated to be the student representative.
4. **It was agreed that Miss Nallarajah be appointed a Student Member of the Corporation, with immediate effect, for a four year term of office (or until she ceases to be eligible to be a student member, if earlier).**

Miss Nallarajah joined the meeting at 5.03 pm.

#### APPOINTMENT OF STAFF MEMBER

5. The Clerk advised the meeting that he had held an election for the position of Staff Member of the Corporation. All members of staff had been eligible to vote. There had been two candidates and a larger number of people had voted than in any of the previous elections he had presided over.
6. Mr Mark Read had been elected by 59 votes to 35.
7. **It was agreed that Mr Read be appointed a Staff Member of the Corporation, with immediate effect, for a four year term of office (or until he ceased to be eligible to be a staff member, if earlier).**

Mr Read joined the meeting at 5.05 pm.

8. The Chair welcomed the two new members of the Corporation, and everyone introduced themselves.

9. **It was noted that Mr Read was a member of the Academic Staff of the College; when the Corporation resolved to increase the members to include a second staff member, that person would be elected by support staff.**
10. With the agreement of the meeting, the Chair re-ordered the agenda to take the Health & Safety Report next, and to consider the Set Up Projects later.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT**

Mrs Beesley joined the meeting for this item.

11. Corporation Members expressed surprise at the number of problems affecting the Tower Block lifts, since these had been refurbished recently. Mr Araniyasundaran reminded the meeting that the refurbishment had been carried out four years ago, and explained that the guide-rails had not been renewed at that time. They had now been replaced.
12. Mrs Beesley was asked whether any aspects of the College's activities gave her serious concerns. She responded by expressing her confidence that safety issues were addressed appropriately, and that a lot more importance was being placed on them.
13. It was noted that, as part of raising awareness of health & safety, information was placed on the Intranet; however Mrs Beesley confirmed that she did not measure the number of occasions the site was visited.
14. The Chair said that he had a number of points of detail that he would raise outside the meeting, with Mrs Beesley and the Principal.
15. Mrs Beesley confirmed that the new Health & Safety Committee, which covered all sites, had held its first meeting. Subsidiary advisory groups were being set up for the individual campuses.
16. The Chair drew attention to the Addendum of the report, addressing the Action Points from the 2003-2004 Report. Action 2.2, namely the preparation of an inventory of hazardous substances, had not been completed. Mrs Beesley confirmed that individual departments had COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Registers; what was lacking was bringing these two together a comprehensive cross-College inventory. Progress was now being made on this task.
17. **It was agreed to adopt the Annual Report and the Chair signed it on behalf of the Corporation.**
18. It was confirmed that Health & Safety Reports would be made directly to the Corporation, on the grounds that all Corporation Members were jointly and severally accountable for Health & Safety in the College.
19. The Principal stressed that he saw it as his responsibility to drive Health & Safety throughout the College. To that end, all managers (including himself) were undertaking the four day Managing Safety course, accredited by the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH).

Mrs Beesley left the meeting at 5.18 pm.

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2005**

20. **With the correction of two typographical errors (capital "A" for "Authorisation to Borrow" in paragraph 58 and the plural "apprentices" for the singular "apprentice" in paragraph 77) the minutes were signed as a correct record.**

21. It was confirmed that no part of these Corporation minutes should be considered as confidential and all related papers should be made available by the Clerk on request.

#### **MATTERS ARISING**

22. The Chair advised that a draft Whistle Blowing Policy would be presented to the next meeting of the Governance & Search Committee.
23. **The report was noted.**

#### **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF CRAWLEY COLLEGE CORPORATION HELD ON 14<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2005**

24. This being the record of the final meeting of Crawley College Corporation it fell to Central Sussex Corporation to approve the minutes.
25. **There was one error of fact in the minutes, at paragraph 6. The Chairman had not authenticated the lease of Unit 11 of the Burgess Hill Vocational Centre; instead it had been the extension to the lease on West Green Community Centre. With that amendment, the minutes were signed as a correct record.**

#### **MATTERS ARISING**

26. The Chair drew particular attention to paragraph 38. He explained that Crawley College Corporation had become aware of a member of staff having been inappropriately treated. The individual circumstances had raised a number of generic points, that the Corporation were concerned should be drawn to the attention of Central Sussex Corporation, to ensure such a situation never arose again.
27. It was suggested that it would be preferable to deal with these points through employment policies. The Chair explained that the policies had existed in Crawley College; it was the poor implementation that had caused the problem. The policies needed to be embedded throughout the organisation.
28. **The specific recommendation from Crawley College Corporation, that Central Sussex Corporation:**
- **“Ensures the creation of an open and positive management structure**
  - **Actively promotes the culture of continuous improvement and development**
  - **Sets up mechanisms which allow staff to purvey their views without fear of intimidation or recrimination**
  - **Promotes the healthiest and most purposeful relationships with the unions**
  - **Sets clear values based on mutual trust throughout the organisation”**

was adopted.

29. **It was agreed to review the effectiveness of these proposals in a year’s time.**

#### **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF HAYWARDS HEATH COLLEGE CORPORATION HELD ON 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2005**

30. This being the record of the final meeting of Haywards Heath College Corporation, it fell to Central Sussex Corporation to approve the minutes.
31. **The Minutes and the Confidential Minutes were signed as a correct record.**

## **MATTERS ARISING**

32. It was noted that Sussex Colleges International Ltd (SCI) had now been fully dissolved.

## **CHAIRMAN'S ACTION**

33. The Chair advised that, as agreed at the last meeting, he had approved the Equality & Diversity Policy, the Race Equality Policy, the Disability Statement and the College Charter.
34. He had also authenticated the application of the seal on the lease of Unit 11 of the Burgess Hill Vocational Centre.
35. He had reviewed the Confidential Minutes of Crawley College Corporation and Central Sussex Corporation with the Clerk and confirmed that none of these should be released into the public domain.
36. At the request of the Governance & Search Committee, he had approved the co-option to the Audit Committee of Mr Janak Shah, Mrs Dorothy Hatfield, both past members of Crawley College Corporation and of its Audit Committee, and of Mr Jon Wright, partner in Price Waterhouse Cooper.
37. He had also approved the co-option to the Finance & Operations Committee of Mr Derrick Johnson, a past member of Crawley College Corporation with financial expertise.
38. There ensued a debate about the process to be followed for the co-option of members of Committees; notwithstanding any perceived urgency, review by the Governance & Search Committee would ensure that individuals were appointed with reference to the overall skills set available to the Corporation.
- 39. The Chair's Actions were ratified.**

## **SET UP PROJECTS**

40. The Clerk laid round copies of the monthly report for September, prepared by Mr Hutchinson of KPMG.
41. The Principal introduced the item, drawing particular attention to the summary at the end of the report. The input required from the consultants to many of the Set Up Project was now complete; the remaining 26 days had been prioritised to give support to each of the Executive Directors in their new roles.
42. A concern was raised about the effectiveness of internal communications throughout the College as a whole and it was suggested that some of the time be re-allocated to support the Executive Director Human Resources and Communications in addressing this.
- 43. The report was received.**

## **BUSINESS REPORTS**

### **REPORT OF THE POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**

44. Mr Harding introduced the report. He drew particular attention to the need to involve Corporation Members in a review of the vision and mission of the College in the light of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) Agenda for Change, and other imminent Government policy developments such as the Foster report.

45. The Committee had recognised how limited Corporation Members' time was. It was proposed to incorporate this within the agreed schedule of meetings.
46. Concern was expressed that determining the strategic direction of the College was the responsibility of the whole Corporation; while much groundwork could be done by the Committee, all Corporation Members should be involved in the discussions. This could not be achieved satisfactorily alongside the normal business within a normal Corporation meeting.
47. It was resolved that the additional meeting that the Policy and Planning Committee had scheduled for the 8<sup>th</sup> December should become a formal, Special Corporation meeting, to review the vision, mission and strategic direction of the College, to commence at 5.00 pm.
48. It was confirmed that the relevant Executive Directors would attend Committee and Corporation meetings to support Corporation Members.
49. **The report was received.**
50. **The Strategic Planning Process was approved.**

#### **REPORT OF THE FINANCE & OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

51. Mr Harding introduced the report.
52. He drew attention to the management accounts; while it was too early to draw any firm conclusions, there were no matters for concern.
53. The Committee had received reports of the forecast outturn for 2004/2005 for both Haywards Heath College and Crawley College; both Colleges were showing deficits, that represented a small percentage of each College's total activity.
54. The outstanding debts of Crawley College were reviewed and an additional bad debt provision of £59K had been agreed. Included within the total was £45K owed by LearnDirect, dating from 2002/2003. While it had been proposed to write this debt off, the Executive would be taking steps to pursue the debt further.
55. The Chair drew attention to the fact that he had no conflict of interest since this debt pre-dated Sussex Enterprise's responsibility for Learn Direct. The Company that owed this amount was in receivership and it would not prove easy to recover the money.
56. Concern was raised that this debt had not been identified within the Due Diligence Review; it was considered that the consultant carrying out the review of the finances should have identified such a significant amount outstanding during any thorough review of debtors.
57. **It was agreed to raise this with the firm that carried out the Due Diligence Review.**
58. It was noted that there would be a delay before any capital receipts could be expected from the sale of Three Bridges and West Green.
59. The Committee was looking to develop effective performance indicators; it was stressed that these must be clear, identify the impact of progress in managing the College, and embedded within the 5 year Strategic Plan.
60. Mr Harding then fed back from the Haywards Heath development Project Team. He focussed in particular on the procurement process being followed. Because of the value of the project, it was necessary to comply with the European Union (EU) procurement guidelines and advertise for expressions of interest through the Official Journal of the EU (OJEU).

61. Twenty nine main contractors had responded by requesting the pre-qualification questionnaire; of these 17 made a formal submission, 2 of which were late. Thirty five firms requested the pre-qualification questionnaire, of which 21 responded, 3 of which were late.
62. The College's professional advisers carried out a review of the submissions, and ranked them in accordance with pre-determined criteria with weightings.
63. Members of the Project Team had met and tested the process, including making an independent assessment of a sample of respondents. The Project Team Members were satisfied with the rigour and robustness of the process and were therefore proposing to accept the rankings put forward by the consultants.
64. Five potential contractors and six cost managers would be invited to tender, with a closing date of 29<sup>th</sup> November.
65. Allowing time for assessment and subsequent presentations to the Project Team, it should be possible to complete the appointment process by 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2005.
66. The Project Team would be discussing with the Executive how best to approach procurement for the subsequent phases of the Development.
67. It was confirmed that the College was not obliged to take the lowest quote, but it would have to demonstrate valid reasons as to why best value was achieved by not accepting the lowest quote.
- 68. The report was received and the Terms of Reference were approved.**
69. The actions of the Committee in increasing the provision of bad debts and writing off bad debts was noted.

#### **REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

70. Mr Berry introduced the report. He advised the meeting that the Chair of the Corporation had raised a number of pertinent questions prior to the meeting, these had all been satisfactorily addressed.
71. He drew attention to the fact that, in addition to the scheduled routine testing there was considerable scope for widening the reviews during the year. One option he was considering was to look at Health & Safety procedures.
72. He placed on record his thanks to Mr Froud for having identified Mr Wright to be co-opted onto the AuditCommittee; he had already demonstrated the added value he brought to the Committee.
73. It was noted that Tenon could assist the College in bench-marking itself, albeit at a price; this could prove helpful.
- 74. The report was received.**
75. It was recognised that the Terms of Reference for the Committee did not make explicit that the Chair of the Committee must always be a Corporation Member. It was agreed to add the words "who shall be a member of the Corporation at the end of 1.3
- 76. With that amendment, the Terms of Reference were approved.**
- 77. The Internal Audit Strategic Plan was approved.**

## REPORT OF HAYWARDS HEATH LCB

78. Mr Delbridge introduced the report. He drew particular attention to the presentation to the LCB from the Student Voice Project, an Action Research Project undertaken by the students themselves. This project, now in its fourth year, not only provided the students with valuable experience, it also gave valuable feedback about the student experience.
79. The LCB meeting had worked well; newly appointed staff representatives had brought a fresh perspective, and the general focus of the agenda on curriculum issues had been appropriate and effective.
80. The new staff members had asked for training; it was recognised that governor training would not be appropriate, but it would be important to develop an alternative training programme to meet the needs of LCB members.
81. Although at the time the LCB was being discussed by Haywards Heath Corporation there had been expressions of concern because the Chair of the LCB would be imposed by Central Sussex Corporation, in the event the LCB members had expressed themselves satisfied with the arrangement. This was no doubt helped by the fact that someone with local experience and knowledge had been appointed Chair.
82. Mr Delbridge drew attention to the lack of representation from Burgess Hill on the LCB.
83. It was pointed out that Mr Froud was looking to establish the Burgess Hill LCB; Mr Harding commented that he was also looking for members of the Crawley LCB.
84. The question was raised as to how many LCBs were sustainable, given the small number of Corporation members. **It was agreed to consider this question further under Any Other Business.**
85. The Chair asked the Clerk to develop a standard format to be used for all Central Sussex reports and minutes.

## GOVERNANCE

### PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

86. The Clerk laid round copies of the Principal's Report.
87. The Principal introduced his report, and gave a brief overview of it, asking Members to take it away to read at their leisure.
88. He drew attention to enrolments. As requested by the Finance & Operations Committee, he had developed two tables that gave an analysis of the numbers of enrolments compared with the targets. Enrolment had gone well in all categories of learner, with the exception of Full-Time Over 19 year-olds; this was unlikely to meet the target without additional measures being taken. Plans were being developed to start additional courses in January and April.
89. The Principal asked for guidance on his proposals to develop a Strategic Alliance with East Surrey College, to support the Gatwick Diamond initiative. He confirmed that the intention was to build on each College's strengths, and increase the total number of people undertaking training from within the Gatwick Diamond.
90. Concern was raised because this might increase the distances people had to travel for training.
91. The Principal pointed out that research indicated that those who were studying at level 1 or 2 tended to require courses close by; learners were much more willing to travel to study on level 3 and level 4 courses.

92. It was confirmed that the Regional Director of the LSC (Mr Ball) had indicated informally that he was very supportive of such a development. It was also noted that the West Sussex Economic Partnership (of which West Sussex County Council was a member), was now working very closely with the Surrey Economic Partnership. Whereas planning for 14-19 year olds, was focussed strongly on the local area, skills development was being seen as a regional issue.
93. There was general support for the proposition.

Miss Nallarajah left the meeting at 7.04 pm.

94. It was essential for the College to obtain Action for Business accreditation to enable it to compete for funding for skills training within the new model. To that end, the Principal asked for one of the Corporation Members to join the College's Steering Group, overseeing the preparations for its assessment.
- 95. It was agreed that the Chair should join the Steering Group.**
96. The Principal drew attention to the Step Ahead Research results for the Employer Satisfaction Index, a survey commissioned by Sussex Enterprise. Crawley College had the highest score of the 7 Further Education Colleges in Sussex, and had done extremely well.
97. The Principal advised the meeting that he had received formal notification from the national NATFHE office of a ballot for strike action planned for November 16<sup>th</sup>, in support of a national campaign for equality of pay with the schools sector.
98. The Principal concluded by drawing attention to a number of successful events, the most significant of which being the formal launch of the new College by the Prime Minister and the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, FE and HE.
99. The Corporation Members congratulated all the staff who had been involved in arranging the visit, which had been organised extremely well. Particular thanks were due to Mrs Radley, and also to the Principal.
- 100. The report was received.**

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

101. The Chair introduced the report.
102. He advised the meeting that he had held three meetings with members of the Asian community and had elicited some interest in representing the community on the Corporation.
103. Since circulating the paper on the role and remit of Local Community Boards, he had realised that it omitted "Health & Safety review" from the terms of reference; he proposed that this be added.
- 104. The role and remit of the Local Community Boards, as amended, was approved.**
105. The Principal confirmed that the Haywards Heath student representatives would like to sit on the Corporation, notwithstanding the pressures of exams and time constraints.
- 106. The report was received.**
- 107. The terms of reference of the Committee were approved.**
108. The Chair then drew attention to some of the specific points within the Committee's terms of reference.

109. The first of these was the number of terms of office that a Corporation Member should serve. **It was agreed that, in principle, Members should not serve for more than 2 consecutive terms of office of four years.**
110. It was confirmed that service with one of the predecessor Corporations did not count towards this.
111. There followed a discussion about “link governor” schemes. It was recognised that some people had found being a link governor very satisfying and effective; others had not. One of the major problems lay with the time pressures on Corporation Members. It was recognised that good communications were vital and that there could be more than one way of achieving this. Attendance at Awards Evenings was valued. One possibility might be to attend departmental Development Days.
112. **It was agreed that this should be considered further by the Governance & Search Committee.**

### **CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE**

113. The Chairman informed the meeting that he and the Clerk had attended an FE Sussex Conference on good governance; unfortunately, although the session on Finance had been excellent, that on Quality and Quality Improvement had been extremely disappointing.
114. He and the Principal had met with representatives of the University of Sussex, with a view to cementing relations between the two organisations.
115. There was to be a meeting of the Chairs of Sussex Colleges in early November, to include a discussion with Norman Boyland, the Chair of the Sussex LSC.

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **LOCAL COMMUNITY BOARDS**

116. As agreed earlier in the meeting, the establishment of LCBs was discussed again. A major question to be addressed was whether a separate LCB for Burgess Hill was required for the benefit of the learners and the College. The Principal stressed that the focus of the discussions had been on involving employers. It was important to explore the expressions of interest, to establish whether it would be sufficient to sustain an LCB. It was suggested that such an LCB could become a sub-set of the Haywards Heath LCB.
117. It was noted that previous attempts by Crawley College to set up an Advisory Group in Horsham had not succeeded; it was not known why they failed. In East Grinstead, however, there had been a successful Advisory Board. This had been focussed on Adult Education.
118. Concern was expressed that there were too few Corporation Members to be able to discharge the responsibilities of chairing all the planned LCBs; on the other hand this was the model that had been developed over time by the Joint Corporation Working Group (JCWG) and it should not be discarded lightly. One option that was suggested was to have one LCB for Skills, that would shape the training at the Vocational Centres at Burgess Hill and East Grinstead.
119. It was suggested that a position paper should be presented to the Corporation, to enable matters to be progressed.

### **GATWICK DEVELOPERS**

120. The Chair drew attention to approaches made independently to Mr Harding and to him by a consortium of developers offering Educational Development Opportunities at Gatwick. The Principal was asked to investigate.

### **ELECTRONIC RECOGNITION SYSTEM**

121. The Chair drew an electronic recognition system to the Executive's attention.

### **NAME CHANGE OF COMMITTEE**

122. A possible name change for the Curriculum and Quality Committee was raised; the Chair advised that he would deal with this under Chairman's Action.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.05 pm.