

CENTRAL SUSSEX CORPORATION

Minutes of a Corporation Meeting held at 17.00 pm on Monday, 4th June 2007 in E5 Haywards Heath Campus

Membership: Clive Behagg*, Patrick Berry, Martin Delbridge (Vice-Chair)*, Mark Froud*, Michael Coughlin*, Paul Harding*, Binita Kataria, Christie McMahon*, Gill Marshman*, Sylvia Meli*, Andreia Moniz, Alan Morris, John Peel (Chair)*, Mark Read, Rosa Sadler*, 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 Patrick Berry, Binita Kataria, Andreia Moniz, Alan Morris and Mark Read, and for lateness from Paul Harding.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. There were no interests to declare.
3. It was agreed to move Items 10 and 13 up the agenda, as Martin Delbridge had to leave early.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE 29TH MARCH 2007

4. In paragraph 36, the word "*correct*" was inserted between "*the*" and "*working*" and the word "*not*" was inserted between "*practices*" and "*being*"; with that amendment, the minutes were signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

5. **Review of Risk Register/20:** Suri Araniyasundaran advised the meeting that he and Alan Morris had not been able to meet; Alan Morris had advised him that the primary need, in his view, was to report to the Resources Committee key performance indicators that affected current activity, rather than end of year outcomes. It was **agreed that a paper should be submitted to the next Resources Committee meeting.**
6. **Annual Provider Review/39:** The Principal confirmed that the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) had accepted all the points he had raised. The report would not be published by the LSC, but the officers would ensure that the contents were corrected before being shared with OFSTED inspectors.
7. **Train to Gain/45:** The Principal advised the meeting that performance against the profile for the overall contract had reached just over 90% by the end of March, which had permitted the College to bid for growth in 2007/08 on behalf of the consortium. The 18 members of the consortium that would be continuing into next year had identified growth of 17% and the College had been given to understand that this had

been approved. The consortium was predicting that it would deliver between 95% and 100% of the total contract this year, the best performance in the South East.

8. In the related matter of Adult Learning Accounts (ALA), the College lay within one of two pilot areas in the country. Additional money had been set aside to encourage adult learners to take Level 3 qualifications. The LSC was encouraging Central Sussex and east Surrey Colleges to increase their joint bid from 40 ALAs to 180 ALAs. The Colleges had not yet decided on their response, as it would present them with a number of complications for hitting that and other targets.
9. **Business Members for the Crawley and Horsham LCB/68:** Christie McMahon advised that, although she had raised this with the Chief Executive of CADIA by e-mail, she had not had a response and had not yet had the opportunity to pursue matters in person.

CHAIRMAN'S ACTION

10. The Clerk advised the meeting that, at the last meeting of the Corporation the Finance & Operations Committee had included a recommendation that the policy for 2007/2008 be approved; however this had been overlooked in the summary of recommendations and no formal resolution had been agreed. The Chair had approved the policy on behalf of the Corporation to enable the Executive to act upon it.
11. **The Chair's Action in approving the Fee Policy for 2007/08 was ratified.**
12. The Resources Committee had asked the Chair to authorise the Executive to re-tender for the sale of Three Bridges; **the Chair's Action to authorise the re-tendering exercise was ratified.**

INTERIM HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT

13. Jenny Poore introduced this item, and took the meeting through the Executive Summary. She confirmed that all the accidents reported to the Health & Safety Executive had been relatively minor; the requirement for reporting them had been because the individuals had been sent to hospital as a precautionary measure.
14. There had been one near miss that was of significance, however, when students had misbehaved in the motor vehicle workshop. This had been dealt with, with appropriate severity, particularly since in recent years there had been two deaths of learners (from other Colleges) in motor vehicle workshops.
15. It was noted that a Steering Group was to be set up to oversee the management of stress in the College, including stress management training. This, it was emphasised would be renamed on the lines of work-life balance.
16. It was agreed that a footnote would be added to the accident graphs for future reports to identify the number of accidents related to the combined total of students and staff.
17. The Principal drew attention to the fact that the report identified a lack of any records of fire testing routines, covering a number of housekeeping points identified by the Consultant who had carried out a programme of fire risk assessments. Further investigation, since the report had been sent out, had established that these records did exist, but that there had been a misunderstanding with the Consultant when he had asked to see them. Consequently, the Principal was pleased to confirm that this did not represent a serious issue after all.
18. There followed a discussion about the proposal to send out the HSE Stress Questionnaire to all staff; a concern was expressed that it may have a demotivating effect.

19. An alternative approach, used elsewhere, was to integrate the questions into a more general staff survey, thus avoiding the risk of it being seen as a bureaucratic exercise. However, the next Central Sussex College staff survey was not planned until the following year and it was emphasised that measures to address stress in the workplace needed to be put in place before then.

20. **The report was received.**

Item 10 was taken next.

REPORT OF THE CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

21. Martin Delbridge introduced the report; he indicated that the main area of discussion for the Committee had been the need to prioritise the curriculum in the light of the LSC's funding requirements. This was forcing more difficult decisions onto the College. There was a risk that some of the provision of the College that was valued most socially could suffer. This problem was likely to continue over the next three to four years at least.

22. **The report was received.**

23. The report of the Burgess Hill and Haywards heath LCB at item 13 was taken next.

REPORT OF THE BURGESS HILL & HAYWARDS HEATH LCB

24. Martin Delbridge introduced the report. He drew attention to the increase in applications for the coming year, which was very encouraging.

25. The LCB had been concerned that a protocol should be established for the event that the LCB lost confidence in its Chair. It was stressed that this was not intended as a reflection on the current membership's view of the charring arrangements.

26. **It was agreed to refer the request for a protocol to the Governance & Search Committee.**

27. Martin Delbridge also expressed his appreciation and thanks to Rosa Sadler and Will Flesher, the two student members of the LCB. They had brought a steady influence to bear on the Board in assessing the impact on learners, of changes and developments on the Haywards Heath campus and this had proved very valuable.

28. Rosa Sadler confirmed that the LCB meetings had been worthwhile; from a personal perspective she had learned a lot and gained a lot.

29. **The report was received.**

PROVIDER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

30. The Principal introduced the report, clarifying that it represented a strategic summary for the benefit of the LSC and did not contain anything that was new to the Corporation.

31. The Principal focussed on the Improvement Indicators: retention was very good, but student achievement was not yet good enough. There were a range of action plans that were being put in place; a major focus was short courses.

32. Work Based Learning (WBL) presented a further set of difficulties, particularly with respect to Advanced Modern Apprenticeships (AMAs). A number of these were four year programmes so there would be a time lag before the steps to raise achievement rates showed through.

33. The meeting questioned why the College success rates for AMAs were so far below national averages. A number of factors were identified as contributing towards this: in some cases mistakes had been made in choosing which learners should progress onto AMAs; in some cases the employer could not offer a sufficiently wide range of job experience.
34. It also appeared that employers were often not really looking for Level 3 qualifications for their staff. It was also the case that the national average related to a range of programmes, whereas the College focussed largely on construction, with a significant proportion in plumbing. As Members of the Corporation were aware the college had experienced staffing difficulties in plumbing, largely because of competition from private providers.
35. It was noted that as yet, value added measures for vocational training were fairly crude and not widespread, so it was difficult to benchmark the College.
36. It was confirmed that Science and Mathematics had recently been accorded a high priority status.
37. It was noted that there was no reference to Commercial Income within the Improvement Indicators section and the Principal agreed to strengthen that section with a reference both to Commercial Income and to the collection of fee income.
38. **The report was received.**

PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

39. The Principal introduced his paper and at the Chair's suggestion invited questions on the first three sections.
40. He explained that the College calendar was being restructured to enable the cascade briefing and related feedback to be introduced and function effectively.

Paul Harding joined the meeting at 5.56 p.m.

41. There was some confusion about the percentage growth projections for Train to Gain. The Principal clarified that the consortium's aggregate growth was planned to rise by 17%; however the College's element within that total was planned to rise by 56%. It was noted that part of the reason for this high growth rate was that it included achievements for learners who had started their programmes during the latter part of this year.
42. An apparent inconsistency was noted between the declared aim (under the College Leadership Team Development Programme) for the College to become an Outstanding/Grade 1 College by 2009, and the proposal that payment should be made under Professional Review Standard/Effective Teaching if teachers were achieving grade 2 in lesson observations. The Principal responded by stressing that the proposals in the paper were still in draft and formed part of an important debate on raising standards.
43. The Teaching and Learning Managers had warned that there may be some unintended consequences leading to grade drift if professional review payment was made dependant upon staff achieving a grade 1 in all their lesson observations.
44. It was commented that there were safeguards in place to prevent grade drift, including moderation and external benchmarking.
45. The Principal then took the meeting through section 4: the proposed College Leadership Team Development Programme, in more detail. At its core was the

European Framework for Quality Management, applied to a Further Education context. The Executive was looking to start the programme before the end of the academic year, with support from Chichester College (who were already part way through the whole programme). The first stage would be to consider “what does excellence look like?”

46. It was essential that there be a whole College approach to achieving a cultural change and an important step towards this would be to consider shared “values” at the next INSET day in July.
47. The Principal confirmed that, because FE Sussex was working with the Colleges to develop this initiative across Sussex as a whole, opportunities were developing to share good practice. The training was, however, College specific and tailored to reflect the different priorities of each College. He was pleased at the response of the newly appointed Teaching & Learning Managers who had embraced this initiative: the newly formed Curriculum Council had also responded with enthusiasm.
48. The Principal reassured the meeting that the nature of the training precluded it being seen as a one-off event; each module included exercises that extended over a period of time, to ensure that changes were embedded within the College.
49. The importance of ensuring that staff were provided with adequate support was stressed, particularly in relation to any issues raised through the professional review system. It was confirmed that a capability procedure did exist, but it was noted that such procedures tend to be very protracted in their operation.
50. It was confirmed that all the new teams would be in place by September. It was recognised that there was an inherent risk that there could be a disconnection between long-standing members of staff and the new teams. The structure of self-managing teams was in place throughout the College; however there was a need to develop the Team Leaders and to give them the necessary support to lead and enable those teams. There were inevitably some groups of staff who were at present cynical and resistant to the changes.
51. It was confirmed that Corporation Members would be involved at an appropriate level within the overall process.
52. The Principal then focussed on the section headed the National Decline in WBL (Work Based Learning). He stressed that initially the Executive had assumed that the downturn in WBL was a problem specific to the College. On further investigation, however, it had become apparent that there was a similar decline in apprenticeships at both regional and national level. It was becoming more and more difficult to sign-up employers and it was probable that the existing market of employers had been saturated.
53. The situation was compounded by the Train to Gain initiative which was conflicting with the apprenticeship frameworks. It was also noticeable that global companies had declined to endorse the Leitch skills pledge (that every employer should make the commitment that “every relevant employee be enabled to gain basic and Level 2 equivalent skills”).
54. The Government is looking to employers to pay a greater share of the costs of training. Until now the College has been very successful in collecting fees; however, there appears to be resistance to the rising fee levels.
55. The Principal and the Chair of the Corporation were looking to meet with the local Member of Parliament, Laura Moffatt MP, to draw this to her attention.
56. The comment was made that the majority of employers, who in general fell into the Small and Medium Sized Enterprise category, were not actually interested in their

employees obtaining qualifications; what they wanted and valued was skills training. Further Education Colleges did not have a good image in that respect.

57. It was pointed out that the amount of money spent by employers on training was increasing and that there were a large number of private providers who demonstrated great flexibility and approached the market in a completely different way.
58. The College needed to consider adopting a different brand and approach.
59. It was recognised that the College was taking steps to become more responsive and flexible; however it was considered that a radical change of approach would be needed. This was of strategic importance to the College and therefore should be considered further by the Corporation.

Martin Delbridge left the meeting at 6.40 p.m.

60. The Principal then introduced the Gatwick Diamond Capital Vision Statement. His covering report addressed progress since the last Corporation Awayday in developing the College's strategic approach towards the Gatwick Diamond Sub-region. The Vision Statement represented a joint proposal by the College and East Surrey College to develop a strategic alliance to address skills training needs in the Sub-region. This also presented the College with an opportunity to develop a fresh branding for its corporate training, for example, under the banner of a Gatwick Skills Academy. Both the Sussex and the Surrey LSCs were supportive of this initiative.
61. The present informal partnership had already given the College the opportunity to bid for Adult Learning Accounts jointly with East Surrey College and it represented a means of overcoming the artificial barrier presented by the Surrey/Sussex boundary.
62. The Principal confirmed that he would present further reports and more detailed proposals as the partnership developed.
63. **The report was received.**
64. **It was agreed to endorse the Gatwick Diamond Capital Vision Statement.**

AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

65. Mark Froud introduced the report and highlighted an area of note, namely the Learndirect contract. He advised the meeting that the Committee had asked the Executive to review the viability of continuing to provide a Learndirect service.
66. The Principal advised that, following an initial review, the contract was not financially sound; however FE Sussex may raise wider implications of withdrawing the provision.
67. It was noted that the Committee had been given a full report of the unsuccessful fraud attempt referred to in the report. The Committee was satisfied with the control measures that had led to the attempt being identified by the bank without impacting on the College's finances.
68. **The report was received.**

REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

69. Paul Harding introduced the report in the absence of Patrick Berry. He pointed out that many of the key issues had already been covered within the Principal's update.
70. The Committee had received a verbal report on the expressions of interest in Voluntary Redundancy; the closing date was the day of the Corporation meeting. Jenny Poore advised the meeting that there had been twelve expressions of interest

in respect of which six people had returned completed application forms. The total cost, if every application was approved, would be in the order of £65k; there had been fewer applications than anticipated.

71. The Committee had raised some similar points in relation to employer engagement as those discussed earlier; there was concern that a great deal of time was spent chasing diminishing Government funding under a variety of guises, with insufficient focus on developing non-government income streams.
72. The Committee had learnt that the developer's bid to buy Three Bridges had been withdrawn; as a result the land had to be re-tendered and no cash would be received this financial year. As well as being delayed, the sale would also realise less money.
73. The Committee had been made aware of difficulties surrounding the tendering for WBL; it was important that the Corporation recognised the risks associated with electronic tendering.
74. Suri Araniyasundaran confirmed that there was no change to the financial forecast.
75. **The report was received.**
76. **It was agreed to endorse the reduction in the fixed interest rate charged by Lloyds TSB from 6.09499% to 5.6449% (a reduction in the margin of 0.4%). The amendment to the Lloyds TSB mortgage covenants to include a de minimus limit on historical cost deficits of 0.5% of Total Income and to exclude items of an exceptional nature such as FRS17 was noted and endorsed.**

REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

77. Paul Harding introduced the report. He emphasised that significant efforts had been made to review the strategic context of the College's various programmes of education and training across its seven campuses: as a result of which it was clear that there were some that lay at the strategic core of the College and others that were more peripheral.
78. A new strategic group comprising the Local Authority, Colleges and Schools had been set up to look at the future of education and training in the area and what infrastructure was required.
79. It was noted that the education and property case did not include an explicit assessment of corporate and commercial training and its needs. The Principal confirmed that he would take account of that and the points raised earlier in the meeting regarding the development of corporate training.
80. It was noted that there needed to be an element of cross-subsidy between the more financially rewarding activities and the College's role as a community learning organisation.
81. **The report was received.**
82. **The overall sector and learner growth profiles identified in the Education Case were approved.**
83. **A series of commercially sensitive recommendations were agreed.**

REPORT OF THE CRAWLEY & HORSHAM LCB MEETING

84. Paul Harding introduced the report. He drew particular attention to the presentation that had been given by Peter Mansfield-Clark, an LCB Member and former Crawley

College Corporation Member. He had made a very powerful case for the needs of a number of people in Crawley who find it hard to access education and training.

85. Paul Harding drew attention to the lack of business members on the LCB and confirmed that attempts to address this issue were still being explored; he planned to meet with the College's Employer Services Department to draw on their links with employers.

86. **The report was received.**

CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

87. The Chair advised that he had attended the inauguration of the High Sheriff of Sussex, Colin Field (the husband of an ex Member of the Crawley College Corporation). He had expressed an interest in visiting the College.

88. The Chair had also attended the FE Sussex Annual Governors Conference at which Sir Bernard O'Connell had given a presentation and hosted a workshop; he was an impressive speaker.

89. The Chair had also attended a couple of open lectures at Brighton and at Sussex Universities as a guest of their respective vice-chancellors and had attended a Crawley Masterplan meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

91. The Clerk made available copies of the calendar of meetings for 2007/08.

92. The Chair drew attention to a report for the Department of Education and Skills on the 2006 consultation about the Instrument and Articles of Government for Further Education Colleges, which he had just received. He advised that he had asked the Clerk to prepare a report for the next meeting.

93. The Clerk advised the meeting that Denise Redford had expanded her role of Deputy Clerk to include more general servicing of the Corporation in place of Hilary Morrison, who would in future be supporting the three Curriculum Executive Directors.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.36 p.m.

The next meeting of the Corporation is scheduled for 19th July at 5.00 p.m.