

THE SOUTH DOWNS COLLEGE CORPORATION

Minutes of meeting held at 5.45 pm on Thursday 29 March 2012 in the Committee Room

Present: Andrew Turner (Chairman), Stephenie Linham (Vice Chair), Tim Bennett, Gwen Blackett, Graham Fice, Ian Child, John Manterfield (Acting Principal), Laxmi Neave, Patricia Thompson, James Warner, Sam Wilkinson

Apologies: Donna Munday, Peter Rhodes, Caroline Strevens, Tony Welch

In Attendance: Susan Grantham, Temporary Clerk to the Corporation
Cllr Ray Bolton (Agenda Item 3)
Richard Barlow, Quality Manager
Chris Harpum, Head of Faculty Arts and Sciences
Liz Norland, Head of Faculty Business and Community

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Ray Bolton, Richard Barlow, Chris Harpum and Liz Norland

950. Search Committee

The Chair noted Cllr Ray Bolton had been nominated by Hampshire County Council to replace the late Freddie Allgood. The Search Committee met earlier in the evening and had agreed unanimously to recommend his appointment to the Corporation. Minutes of that meeting will be circulated.

On the proposal of the Chair, it was AGREED unanimously that Cllr Ray Bolton be appointed a member of the Corporation under clause 2(1)(a) of the Instrument of Government for a period of 4 years with effect from 29 March 2012. Hampshire County Council will be advised accordingly.

The Chair officially welcomed Cllr Bolton noting that it was an exciting time for the Corporation. The College had been successful for over twenty years, and Principal Lyn Surgeon was taking up post on 1 April. The College was now working in a different political climate and he hoped that members have had an opportunity to read the Acting Principal's email sent earlier in the day which sent out a very upbeat and positive message to staff and governors. The Corporation had been familiar with working with surpluses within budget for many years and were now having to work within a tighter framework.

951. Self-Assessment Report (SAR) (Doc.C12/11 was circulated with the agenda)

The Acting Principal noted the Self-Assessment process had followed the same format for many years and commences in curriculum areas predicated on their SAR and action plans. The 2010/11 report was different in some ways and took a more rigorous approach to grading and compared the performance of South Downs with other colleges. As reported at the 1 March meeting, the College's success rates had not improved in line with national averages. The report for the 2011/12 year will be in a different format and contain less narrative and more judgemental comments and evidence. He thanked his senior colleagues present and the Senior Leadership Team as a whole for their support to him as Acting Principal and for their hard work in the SAR process which reflected a very accurate report.

Richard Barlow introduced the report noting it was shorter, less descriptive, more evaluative and critical. The College had set themselves very ambitious targets. Overall the SAR was graded Good, with some outstanding features. Key grades and component grades were all judged as good - Capacity to Improve; Outcomes for Learners. Overall success rates need to improve and is a retention issue. In the last academic year there had been significant improvements to success rates, particularly on AS/A Levels, but there was more work to do.

The presentation on the SAR is attached to the minutes and includes details of outstanding features and areas for improvement. All key grades are Good: Overall Effectiveness, Capacity to Improve, Outcomes for Learners, Quality of Provision, Leadership and Management.

Richard Barlow highlighted:

Outcomes for Learners: Good - Outstanding level of enjoyment by learners – Learners consistently rate their experience at South Downs more highly than learners in similar institutions - the graph at para 21 benchmarks the College against average scores for FE institutions. There are some very good areas of achievement but others need to be improved. Literacy and numeracy are two main thrusts to embed into all teaching provision and full-time GCSE Maths and English results need improvement. Students undertake much voluntary work but monitoring systems need to improve to capture more information and support learners in their community work.

Feel Safe; Health and Well-Being; Make a Positive Contribution – all graded Outstanding with areas still improving.

Quality of Provision: Good - A great deal of outstanding teaching and learning – further improvements required in high grades and value added.

Chris Harpum highlighted:

Quality of provision refers to the year 2010/11 but also includes information on in-year data.

Teaching, training and assessment: Good - The March internal inspection of three curriculum areas resulted in a number of high grades and external consultants commented on the high levels of teaching and learning; Aim High initiative (previously Gifted and Talented) is very successful; a need to improve the proportion of examination high grades and value added to show a trend over three years.

Needs and Interests of Users: Good – over 3000 work experience placements provided; areas for development include work-based learning provision.

Partnerships: Good - The College now has 30 apprenticeships; a member of staff has been appointed to lead and develop across all curriculum areas; the need to make far greater use of employers; excellent partnerships throughout curriculum areas but further development required and need to interact more in the community; the Senior Leadership Team have been encouraged to become governors at local schools; many outstanding partnerships e.g. the very successful 'takeover' of Langstone Hotel by Catering and Hospitality students last year and again this May; recent establishment of Synergy hair and beauty brand at the hotel.

Care Guidance and Support: Good - More and more students choosing not to go to University and need to understand what employers want from them in the future; cannot separate from the issue of retention; need to ensure support systems are effective to allow students to achieve their programme.

Liz Norland highlighted:

Leadership and Management: Good – component grades:

Expectations and Ambition: Good - Need to set challenging headline targets for success at all levels; high expectations from staff and students to permeate a culture of success; the College celebrates endeavour and needs to focus on success and achievement – a number of posters are now displayed around the College.

Governance: Good - Governance is very effective; need to ensure governor challenge continues to make a positive impact on success rates – retention rates for AS/A2 are 2% above the same time last year; the Financial Management Control Evaluation has been graded outstanding for the last two years.

Safeguarding: Outstanding; Equality and Diversity; User Engagement: All graded Good with areas for improvement.

Self-Assessment: Good – high quality lesson observation borne out by external consultants; need to ensure positive impact on success rates.

Value for Money: Outstanding – excellent resources - staff welcome the new Football Facilities which will be a tremendous resource for students; running costs are below the national average for general colleges of further education.

Key Grades and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

Richard Barlow summarised noting the overall grade of Good with very good and outstanding features but cannot be judged as outstanding. Page 99 onwards of the SAR details the QIP which draws on Operational Targets. Page one details overall success rate targets and indicates positive progress on retention as at 20 February 2012. Throughout the curriculum targets there is an unrelenting focus on success rates and high grades.

The Acting Principal noted the headings used throughout the SAR are the key questions as contained in the Ofsted College Inspection Framework Handbook.

Questions were invited from members:

Governor role to drive success rates up – Acting Principal noted the College will continue to issue governors with information on progress being made on retention and key Operational Targets. The informed challenge from governors was welcomed.

Governors asked whether the lower grade would trigger a speedy response from Ofsted for inspection. Richard Barlow advised Ofsted have the headline data already and it is important that the SAR and QIP reflect that information accurately. Liz Norland, Ofsted nominee, noted that Ofsted review each May and a number of factors may trigger inspection – change of leadership, success rates that have flat-lined. The College could be inspected this academic year; she also noted three weeks ago a college received a no-notice inspection pilot. Ray Bolton asked whether students have access to the SAR; Richard Barlow advised it is publicised to staff and he would be happy to discuss this approach with John Manterfield and Lyn Surgeon. Ian Child welcomed the more self-critical approach; we have capacity to improve and the QIP but he would like to see a better view to achieve outstanding. The Acting Principal advised that if we can raise success rates by 3% it would take us into outstanding if coupled with improved retention and high grades. Liz Norland confirmed that course managers are asked to set challenging targets for improvement – on some courses too many students leave us too early; more work is being progressed and we are 5% ahead of last year. Gwen Blackett asked about the procedure to follow up students who don't stay. Chris Harpum confirmed students are followed up and asked about their experience. A record is kept for students who said they were going to enrol but don't as well as for those who leave – sometimes the reasons are out of our control but we are now involving parents more. The Acting Principal advised we are reviewing the structure of some courses, e.g. literacy and numeracy for adults where courses have been spread over a number of years. We have now set completion targets in-year which give a greater chance they will be retained until the end of the course – this is a significant part of our provision and therefore very beneficial.

On the proposal of the Chair

- (i) The presentation of the Self-Assessment Report 2010/11 was RECEIVED.
- (ii) The College's Self Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan was RECEIVED.

952. The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2012 were AGREED whereupon the Chairman SIGNED the minutes.

953. Matters Arising – Havant Academy (Minute 939) – The Acting Principal advised the transfer was progressing with a view to completion on 31 March.

954. Vacancy on the Audit Committee

The Temporary Clerk reported a message from Donna Munday that Ian Child had attended the Audit Committee on 24 May and had confirmed his willing to stand.

On the proposal of the Chair it was AGREED unanimously that Ian Child be appointed to the Audit Committee for a period of two years with effect from 29 March 2012.

955. Audit Committee

(Doc.C12/12 was circulated with the agenda)

The Temporary Clerk reported a message received from Donny Munday that it had been a good Audit Committee meeting and members were pleased to receive all reports which had been given Substantial Assurance with some tiny housekeeping recommendations. The Committee was pleased to note the progress of the Finance Team. As previously reported, Ian Child had attended the meeting as an observer and had confirmed his willingness to stand.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2012 were RECEIVED.

956. Staffing Report

(Doc.C12/13 was circulated with the agenda)

The Acting Principal confirmed the report detailed leavers and a few starters. Overall there was a slight decrease in the number of teaching staff which is often the position at this time of year. There was a very slight increase in support staff. Overall he was pleased to report the monitoring matched the budget for teaching and support staff.

The Chair referred to the Acting Principal's email received earlier in the day and asked if members had any questions. Tim Bennett asked where staff may wish to reduce hours what would be the impact on improving quality. The Acting Principal confirmed that from time to time there are needs to review staff hours. Teaching staff hours need to reflect shifts in what courses are popular with students, i.e. leading to employment. Heads of Faculty noted shifts in provision but overall applications are good but with definite trends. Graham Fice noted staffing costs represent 77% of College turnover and asked how our budget compares with other colleges. The Acting Principal noted the sector average was some 70% but it was difficult to compare a like for like situation as some colleges carry significant servicing of debts. The College has had a policy of providing first-rate conditions of service and staff salaries have been higher and with generous remission for teachers for other roles undertaken. Remission was important and needs to reflect an impact on learners but was now being reviewed. Savings were being sought in over-time and additional hours in the first instance.

The report was RECEIVED.

957. Football Facilities Update

(Doc.C12/14 was laid around the table)

The Acting Principal apologised for the lateness of the report which he wished to reflect the most up-to-date position. Various legal documents were signed by the end of last week and he thanked Cllrs Gwen Blackett and Ray Bolton for their support in chasing officers at Havant Borough Council and Hampshire County Council. The key document, Section 106 agreement, had been signed and exchanged to enable development to commence. The archaeological visit took place earlier in the day and work had started. 24-hour security presence had now been put in place as 95% of the fencing had been pushed over during the first weekend. The financial valuation had been received for the work carried out to date and was very much in line with what was required to ensure the Skills Funding Agency grant was paid. We need formally to sign and finalise the underlease between HBC and ourselves and the headlease between HCC and HBC was being progressed. Our solicitors have emailed progress to date and it was hoped to finalise next week.

On the proposal of the Chair

- (i) The report was RECEIVED.
- (ii) it was AGREED unanimously that the Chairman/Vice-Chairman and Principal be authorised to finalise the contract with A P Thompson subject to finalisation of the Underlease and Lease.

958. Urgent Business

The Chairman recorded his thanks to the Senior Leadership Team for their hard work over the last several months. It had been a great opportunity to work with them throughout the successor principal interview process and have their input. He noted that in turn the Senior Leadership Team had requested the Chair, on their behalf, to thank John Manterfield for his vast efforts as Acting Principal, which he endorsed. John's efforts had been very clearly reported in the two emails circulated to staff which had been incredibly positive, yet realistic. His support to the staff and the Senior Leadership team have been fantastic. John Manterfield thanked the Chair noting he had very much enjoyed the role and learning a great deal more about the College. He commended the support of the Senior Leadership Team and his outer office, who had worked long hours and Susan Grantham in particular. The Chairman thanked Susan Grantham.

The Chair advised he was meeting with Lyn Surgeon on 5 April. The Corporation had moved to a non-committee based system a couple of years ago and he wished to know her views. He considered that it might be time to move back to a fuller committee system and give additional time to look at finances and standards and quality and drill-down into the figures. He invited members to email him/Susan Grantham with their views prior to his meeting with Lyn Surgeon.

The Chair closed the meeting noting the College and Corporation was entering a new interesting phase and he was very grateful to governors for their support. He again thanked John Manterfield.

959. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was CONFIRMED as Thursday 14 June 2012 at 5.45 pm.

[The meeting was declared closed at 6.48 pm]

Sg/020412Revised