

THE WKCIC GROUP BOARD: 29th MARCH 2017

MINUTES

PRESENT Catherine Boyd-Maunsell, Dr Leslie Brissett, Shane Chowen, Alastair Da Costa (Chair), Vidusun Edirimanasinghe, Joel Featherman, Heather James, Mike Magras, Simon Pitkeathley, Amelia Sussman, Fiona Thompson (left at 18:15, after audit committee update), Kay Willis (attended at 17:10, during item 4), Andy Wilson, Mike Magras (attended at 17:40, during item 4)

IN ATTENDANCE Claire Collins (Group Director, HR and OD), Anna Douglas (Principal, City & Islington College), Kim Caplin (Principal, Westminster Kingsway College) (attended at 6 pm for Item 3), Graham Drummond (Clerk), Raj Kakaiya, Caireen Mitchell (Group Director Planning and Performance), Paul Stephen (Group Finance Director), Julie Ellis

APOLOGIES Ruth Duston, David Gilbertson, Dame Martina Milburn, Professor Anthony Smith, Alex Booth

INTRODUCTIONS

Board members were asked of any new appointments or accolades acquired since the meeting of 8th March 2017. Simon Pitkeathley, appointed in December 2016 as a Member of the London Mayor's Local Enterprise Partnership for London (LEAP), is now its small business representative for London.

The Board also noted that Paul Stephen had recently been appointed as the Principal of Newham College; he is due to take up this role in June. Paul was congratulated on this appointment.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: None.

1. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8th MARCH 2017** **Action
GD/JE**
Subject to the amendment on page 2 to the years of the Strategic Plan to 2017/20, the minutes of the Board's meeting on 8th March 2017 were **agreed** as an accurate record.
2. **MATTERS ARISING**
The Board noted that:
 - With respect to item 4: Change of Name, the Chair and Vice Chair will be appointed as directors to Capital City College Group and Capital City College Training respectively. Advice will be sought from Eversheds on whether it would be prudent for each company to have further governor directors. Further volunteers for the roles may be sought in due course.
3. **QUALITY OVERSIGHT**
3a A report providing details of the outcome of a student survey carried out at both colleges was considered and received. It was noted that:
 - The survey is a Quality Data Processing ("QPD") survey and, as such, enabled the Group to compare against the benchmarks generated by all other colleges that use QPD;
 - The Training Arm and WKC were more familiar with the QPD format than CIC and this may explain some of CIC's unexpectedly depressed results. WKC also performed below expectation but had improved satisfaction with maths and English and general satisfaction remains good;
 - The response rate was 60%;

- The colleges performed strongly on safeguarding, but, particularly CIC, not so strongly on student satisfaction, assessment and support;
- The Training Company performed above the benchmark. Coaches working with the teams and 6-8 weekly progress reviews were among the factors attributed to this positive outcome;
- The methodology for assessment may affect the yield of results depending on the type of course undertaken. For example, the A level student who likes two out of three A levels is unlikely to “strongly agree” overall that they are satisfied, even though satisfaction may be very high with individual subjects. However, the view was expressed that methodology alone should not affect results so adversely;
- CIC has a high proportion of 16-18 year olds, who, historically, appear to be less likely to indicate positive satisfaction;
- It was observed that there is usually more notable variation in the first of the biannual surveys and this is closer in time to induction periods. Newer students may not be used to the greater independence expected of them;
- This particular survey does not show “distance travelled”, but future surveys will; the Board was keen that it could tangibly demonstrate that issues arising had been specifically addressed;
- Mitigating actions taken include the Learner Voice week, a review of feedback provided to students and student-submitted Trip Advisor-type LOOP reviews;
- The survey was internal only. It has no impact on survey tables that appeared in FE Week. The results in the FE week survey were based on the single question “would you recommend the college?”

3b An English and Maths Progress Report 2016/7 was received and considered, with both colleges providing updates. It was noted that:

- There are 3750 students studying English and maths, including a significant number who have had to re-sit many times;
- CIC had entered 329 borderline English and maths students for their GCSE re-sits in November of whom 89 achieved a grade C or above;
- Attendance is an area for development particularly at CBAT and CHSSC;
- There are 40-50 English and maths teachers across the Group, of whom a significant proportion are agency staff as there are difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. Agency staff are observed, but they are recruited with the expectation that they can teach without supervision. The recruitment agency used, Morgan Hunt, also runs its own CPD programme to maintain quality control;
- GCSEs are to be reformed, with alphabetical grades being replaced by numerical grades from 1-9, with 9 being the highest attainable. While Level 4 will be regarded as an A-C equivalent pass, it is expected that universities will generally aim to admit students who have achieved Level 5;
- The movement from continuous assessment to linear exams will limit the ability of students to re-sit legacy exams.

4. FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT

4b Capital Budget 2017/8 – IT and estates

With respect to IT the following was noted:

- Included within the report was an ‘in principle’ recommendation to invest c£2m in the Group’s IT infrastructure. It was further noted that the Finance and Resources Committee will be asked to approve the first package of works at its meeting on 9th May;
- Investment is needed to address areas requiring improvement including Wi-Fi coverage, system resilience, telephony, services, storage and skills-gaps in the present in-house team; a report from an IT consultancy called HHES was annexed to

the paper which detailed the shortcomings of the present arrangements;

- In some cases the Group has not followed what would be an optimal five-year renewal cycle; under this, it would renew 20% of the equipment annually, but some equipment is older than this;
- By May, a detailed business plan and recommendation to award a tender regarding the Local Area Network will be considered by the Finance and Resources Committee;
- The Group is looking to buy software to track the intensity of IT usage to anticipate needs as and when they arise thus avoid having to engage in such a significant one-off replacement programme in the future. Existing equipment will be recycled before new purchases are made as it may be that some parts of the Group have more computers than required. It was further noted that the Finance and Resources Committee had been reassured that IT spending would be carried out in such a way to allow the integration of other institutional members to the Group, such as the College of North East London (CONEL) if this was to take place.

Estates

With respect to Estates the following was noted:

- A proposal for a summer works budget of £3.7m was also included within the report. The aim of the proposal is to renew classroom equipment and improve the estate, including more cost-effective lighting;
- The Board was assured that the Group would not be overstretching itself with this proposed expenditure; the Group has £18-19m in cash reserves;
- Capital spending in 2016 (in advance of the City and Islington College and Westminster Kingsway merger) was deliberately reined in by £1m per college. This explains, in part, why a higher level of investment is now being recommended and it is consistent with the level of capital expenditure in previous years;
- The traditional approval of capital investment proposals in June/July has historically made it difficult to ensure that improvements and new stock are in place for the start of the new academic year. Seeking approval for expenditure at the Finance and Resources Committee in February allows for summer works to be planned, procured and implemented in good order;

The Board **AGREED**:

- To approve the summer works budget of £3.7m;
- To approve in principle an investment of c£2m in IT infrastructure, subject to detailed business case, procurement and further committee scrutiny in May.

5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE TO THE BOARD

The Chief Executive presented a report on the strategic priorities for 2017-18. The Board noted that:

- As noted at the Board meeting of 8th March, the final report of the Central London's area review has been published;
- The WKC and CIC merger was treated as a recommendation by the steering group for Central London and a transitional grant payment of £100K was received accordingly;
- A number of London college mergers are underway, including that of the City of Westminster College and the College of North West London with the objective of completion by 1st August 2017;
- Merger discussions that have stalled include that of West Thames College with Uxbridge and Harrow and Kensington and Chelsea College with City Lit;
- Although talks with CoNEL continue, the Board asked that an open mind continues to be kept about collaboration with other suitable partners;
- The Group's negotiations with CoNEL regarding merger continue with both parties having satisfied mutual due diligence enquiries; Andy Forbes, the Principal of CoNEL has drafted a consultation paper to explain the benefits of a merger; further talks will take place on the strategic fit and what the enlarged group would look like if merger took place;

- The Chief Executive is to give evidence to the London Assembly Enquiry on Area Reviews on 7th April;
- The Group will be exploring the possibility of developing an Institute of Technology, for which the prospectus for application is due to be published imminently and put before the Curriculum and Performance Committee for consideration;
- The Group can consider making applications to the Mayor's fund for small projects up to £20K in value which may become available;
- The Education and Skills Funding Agencies are to merge to form the ESFA;
- CCCG's application to be included on the Register of Approved Apprenticeship Providers has been successful;
- It has recently been announced that the compulsory teaching of English and maths until Grade C is achieved may be substituted by functional skills provision; it is unclear how any such change would affect the Group's overall results as the present skills pass rate is lower than that of GCSE Grades A-G;
- There is a staff survey in progress in which staff are being actively engaged to input their views on the nature of the core values of the new Group;
- Capital City College Training ("CCCT") was launched on 23rd February as the focus for business operations at an event attended by Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe;
- The Group commissioned YouGov to conduct a survey of 1117 employers on skills gaps that may emerge as a consequence of Brexit;
- The licence agreement made between the CCCG and CCCT and The WKCIC Group, to use the names of Capital City College Group and Capital City College Training for trading purposes will be announced after Easter after legal advice is obtained on appropriate usage of the names.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION UNIT UPDATE

The College Principals of Westminster Kingsway and City and Islington College presented an update on the implementation of the Development and Innovation Unit. The Board noted:

- The unit will assess the impact of different practice on learner outcomes and support growth of new curriculum provision which will in turn support the strong continuous professional development and learning plans in place across the colleges;
- The unit will do this through the oversight of Innovation Fund projects;
- There will be a governance board to monitor the projects with the power to authorise the funding of projects up to £10,000 in value;
- The Group has appointed Curee (Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education) to advise on the implementation and evaluation of the unit;

The Board viewed this as a positive development which could make the Group more appealing in a competitive market for recruiting teachers.

7. STUDENT REPORTS

The WKC student governor took the Board through the first edition of Student News for 2017, drawing attention to recent events at the college, such as the Challenge event run by the National Citizenship Service, and the Festival of Sport Campaign.

The CIC student report was noted and received.

8. ORGANISATIONAL BUSINESS

A membership update was considered and received. It was noted that the following membership additions had been made to the Training Board:

- Dame Martina Milburn
- Adrian Day
- Shirley Collins (on a co-opted basis)
- Katherine Fleming (on a co-opted basis)

An opportunity was provided to committee chairs to provide an update on the activities their committee or group.

With respect to the Audit Committee the following was noted:

- A retendering of the Group's Financial Statements Audit Service was currently underway and committee members would be participating in the final interview process;
- Following the SFA Audit Review in October 2016 it had been decided that an SFA appointed audit service (rather than the Mazars) would be used to carry out an audit of the Group's learner recording systems. The Committee had been of the view that following the outcome of the SFA audit, the Group were likely to receive another audit visit in October 2017 and therefore it was deemed prudent to appoint specialist auditors to identify issues in a timely manner. The precise arrangements for this audit have yet to be agreed however it was noted the committee would be informed of progress made to address the risks associated with this area of the Group's operations.

The Chair informed Board members that the terms of reference of the advisory boards are currently under review and that CONEL had expressed interest in understanding whether there was scope in delegating more responsibility to the advisory boards. It was further noted that a full governance review was due to take place in the summer of 2018 and that the Board would be considering governance issues at its workshop on 7th June. The Chair gave Advisory Board chairs an opportunity to provide an update.

The WKC Advisory Board Chair gave a brief summary of discussions that had taken place at their meeting on 8th February 2017. Views provided by advisory board members included:

- Course content could involve more direct input from employers, so that the College's offer could continue to be focussed on business need;
- The college's offer needs to be dynamic whilst remaining within the overall group strategy;
- Ideas to implement this such as peer and employer mentoring, traineeships and work experience were discussed with reference to themes in the Group's Strategic Plan.

The CIC Advisory Board Chair gave a brief summary of discussions that had taken place at their meeting on 1st February 2017. Views provided by advisory board members included:

- The issue of what the College needs to do to improve its Level 4 plus course offer, and ensure that the provision addresses London's skills gap was discussed in depth;
- The College needed to promote what its strengths were and what made it stand out from other providers;
- In furtherance of this, the college had fostered strong partnerships, particularly with public sector employers locally, but also worked on developing soft skills and engaging parents.

9. CHANGES TO QUALIFICATIONS

A report was considered, noted and received.

10. EXTERNAL POLICY DIGEST

A report was considered, noted and received.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Board commended members of staff at the CIC nursery on being awarded an outstanding grade by Ofsted following a recent inspection.

Lastly it was noted that since the Board's last meeting there have been a number of offsite incidents at both colleges. College Principals and their management teams have been working closely with the Police to ensure that the risk to students' wellbeing and safety is minimised, whilst ensuring that college rules and procedures are followed, and where necessary sanctions are enforced.

Signed as a correct record: _____

Alastair Da Costa, Chair of the Board

The next meeting will be on Thursday 25th May 2017 at 6pm, venue to be confirmed.