

Newham Sixth Form College

Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2016

Present: Gail May (Chair), Christopher Owens, Jessie Robinson, Rania Hafez, Jay Nair, Shazia Ali-Webber, Terry Paul, Claire Blakemore, Joanne Dean, Rayon Walters, Eddie Playfair

In attendance: Ray Ferris (Vice Principal), Arthur Hasler (Director of Finance and Resources), Nick Christoforou (Director of Studies), Tracy Oko (Director of Student Services), Paul Baglee (Clerk)

Apologies for absence were received from Meg Dabasia, Chinye Jibunoh, Mariam-Oluwabusayo Ajibola and Alfred Cardona (Head of Quality, Teaching and Learning).

1. Declarations of interest

There were no interests declared.

2. Rayon Walters

The governors welcomed Rayon Walters to his first meeting of the governing body. Mr Walters had been elected from among the teaching staff as a staff governor.

3. Security alert

The governors were advised that the college was evacuated on 17 May 2016 as the result of a bomb hoax. An alert was first raised on 16 May 2016 and the police were advised, but following a risk assessment the police determined that no further action should be taken at that time. However, when further concerns were raised on 17 May 2016, the police instructed that the building should be evacuated. The college was therefore evacuated at 10.30 am and this disrupted public examinations. The building was then searched by bomb-sniffing dogs and no devices were found. The college was able to re-open and the afternoon public examinations took place on site.

The governors were further advised that the examination boards would be advised of the disruption and asked to give the students affected special consideration. The level of disruption caused by the evacuation had impacted on communications and a small number of students had not attended for the afternoon examinations. The principal thanked the staff and students for their co-operation during the evacuation which had gone smoothly. He also thanked the staff at Cumberland school who were ready to provide a venue for the afternoon examinations if the college had not reopened.

The governors noted that this was now a police matter, but that the college would review the efficiency of its emergency procedures in light of the evacuation to see if any lessons could be learned.

4. Presentation on British values

The governors received a presentation on British values from Tracy Oko.

The governors were advised that an unannounced Ofsted monitoring visit had taken place on 4 May 2016 to review the college's progress in implementing the Prevent duty and ensuring that the curriculum promotes fundamental British values. The inspectors looked specifically at:

- the progress that leaders and managers have made in ensuring students are sufficiently involved in the implementation of the college's statutory duties under the Prevent legislation
- the extent to which leaders and managers have addressed the need to plan a coherent approach to ensuring students have a broad enough education about life in the United Kingdom and British values
- what has been done to improve the focus on topics such as women's rights, forced marriage and female genital mutilation to help students make informed choices and stay safe
- the progress that leaders, managers and governors have made in ensuring that a single faith group does not dominate the multifaith room, and what actions have been taken to ensure the multifaith room is a comfortable and welcoming place for staff and students of all faiths and beliefs to use for prayer and quiet reflection.

The governors were advised that the inspectors had concluded that insufficient progress had been made in all of these areas. The college had taken a range of actions to immediately address these issues. These included ensuring that fundamental British values were sufficiently addressed in all subject areas, organising tutorials on women's rights and safeguarding and changing the focus for all tutorials to focus on life in modern Britain. In addition the college would also revise the student induction programme, open a new multifaith room and commission external consultancy support from the Education Training Foundation – this includes on-line training for governors.

The principal assured the governors that the college were taking these findings very seriously and was acting promptly to address them. The college would seek external expert advice to assure the actions taken.

Governors' questions (*responses in italics*)

- a) Are job applicants asked questions at interview to assess their understanding of fundamental British values? *Not at the moment, but we will add this to our list of questions.*
- b) Do you receive Prevent advice and support from the local authority? *We work closely with the local authority's Prevent team and use national training materials.*
- c) Do staff take a consistent view to the Prevent duty? *Staff might have a range of personal views, but they all understand and implement the Prevent duty.*
- d) What will be different about the new multifaith room? *It will be more welcoming than the existing room, so that it is no longer perceived as a single faith room. We are working with the user committee to achieve this. It is important to remember that NewVic is a secular college with no religious societies.*

Decision: the governors agreed to form a working group to oversee the work to make rapid progress in the areas identified by the inspectors. The membership of this group to be Gail May, Joanne Dean, Terry Paul and Shazia Ali-Webber.

Action: staff selection arrangements to include assessment of candidates' understanding of fundamental British values

The governors thanked Tracy Oko for her presentation and for her work to address the monitoring visit findings.

5. Area Based Review and partnerships

The governors received a report on the Area Based Review and partnerships. The report contained two partnership proposals regarding the London Sixth Form Partnership and academy conversion as part of a multi-academy trust.

The principal advised the governors that the London Sixth Form College Partnership would be a partnership of six of the 12 London sixth form colleges in the first instance, although the others could join later. The partnership would be directed by the principals and would focus on helping the colleges improve the quality of their provision and delivering bespoke training. It would be led by a leader of professional development and each college would make a contribution of no more than £20k to its costs. If the partnership was successful some of its training could be sold to non-members.

Governors' questions (*responses in italics*)

- a) Can the commitment of this expenditure be justified in a difficult financial climate and when the market already offers a wide range of staff and leadership development providers? *It's not an ideal time to commit to new expenditure, but an investment is necessary to provide the capacity to drive the partnership and deliver the staff development that the colleges would have needed to purchase. Similar partnerships already exist and this will provide bespoke support that will add value to the institutions. We do not think that this could be delivered through the AoC or SFCA. The resources will be used to employ a partnership director across the colleges to co-ordinate the network and to provide advice and support. At this stage, this is not a long term commitment and it will be reassessed after the first year.*
- b) Will governors be involved? *Not in the first instance, but there might be opportunities for governor involvement in the future.*

Decision: governors agreed to confirm their support for the partnership and asked to be provided with more details of the work programme potential outcomes. The governors acknowledged that this did not represent a long term commitment.

The principal also reported on the work to form partnerships with local schools. Sixth form colleges had the option to convert to 16-19 academies and applications need to be made through the area based review. Early discussions had taken place with a number of local secondary school headteachers regarding the formation of a multi-academy trust. There was support for this from the headteachers. However, the regional schools commissioner had visited the college and, although he was keen for NewVIc to contribute to a multi-academy trust, he questioned the composition under discussion. Therefore, the principal added that he and the Chair would be meeting

the headteacher and chair of an outstanding secondary to discuss forming a multi-academy trust with a different composition.

The governors noted that the first area based review visit had now taken place and a decision about the future status of the college would need to be taken in the next three months (Joanne Dean reported that the FE Commissioner had stated that the opportunity for colleges to convert to academy would still be in place after the area based review process was completed. This was contrary to the initial advice from the Education Funding Agency and clarification would be sought). The principal asked for the governing body's approval to register an interest in converting to academy with the Education Funding Agency.

Governors' questions (*responses in italics*)

- c) Will other options be explored and how will governors be informed on the advantages and disadvantages of each option? *No one is coming forward with other options, so there might not be a wide choice. The only other stand out option is merger. We will discuss options at our development day.*
- d) How will our curriculum change if we join a partnership with schools and would this partnership put us at a competitive disadvantage? *The schools we are talking to are 11-16 schools, so there would not be any competition for post 16 places. NewVlc would bring its infrastructure and post-16 expertise to the partnership.*
- e) Would being part of a multi-academy trust affect the London Sixth Form College Partnership? *The two are absolutely compatible.*

Decisions:

- **The governors agreed that the principal should register an interest in academy conversion with the Education Funding Agency.**
- **The governors agreed that the Chair and principal should talk with other schools regarding forming a multi-academy trust and develop a clear proposition for partnership.**
- **The governors noted that the principal had been contacted by the principal of Newham College regarding closer curriculum modelling and agreed that discussions should take place.**
- **The governors agreed that information about academisation and other governance models should be published on the governor pages of the website.**

6. Principal's report

The governors received and considered the report of the principal.

a) Key performance indicators 2015/16

The governors received and noted the college's performance against the 2015/16 key performance indicators. The governors were advised that there was no substantive change since the indicators were last reviewed.

b) Planning for 2016/17: college budget

The governors were advised that the college had now received an amended funding allocation from the Education Funding Agency. There had been some relief from the reductions to disadvantaged funding and this would now be phased in over two years. However, the college would still need to find spending reductions of £1.1 million.

There had been a reduction of 7.3 posts through voluntary redundancies so far, but additional reductions were required and this equated to a further 1.5 posts. Two teams were still at risk and it was hoped that a solution could be found without the need for any compulsory redundancies. The governors noted that there were no early retirements and the redundancy payments would be met from this financial year which could lead to a small deficit.

c) Student recruitment 2016/17

The governors received and noted a report on the student applications for 2016/17.

The governors were advised that the college had received 2071 applications against a target of 2512. There would be an additional open day and the priority would now be to convert applications to enrolments.

d) Summer term development day

The governors agreed that Bill Watkin, CEO of the SFCA and Selina Stewart from the Education Training Foundation should be the guest speakers at the development day on 11 June 2016. Bill Watkins would focus on the future governance options for the college and Selina Stewart on the Prevent duty. Governors were asked to complete an on-line Prevent duty training session before the event – a link will be circulated.

e) Development plan update

The governors received and noted the development plan update.

f) Stakeholder meetings

The governors received and noted minutes from the stakeholder meetings.

7. Post inspection action plan

The governors received and considered an updated version of the post inspection action plan.

The governors were advised that the plan would be updated to reflect the findings of the Ofsted monitoring visit, with the RAG rating for the tasks relating to fundamental British values and Prevent being changed to red. The governors noted that the attainment target for English GCSE was more likely to be met than the maths GCSE target. It was also noted that the targets for teachers to use the TLA strategies had not yet been met.

Governors' questions (*responses in italics*)

- a) Are the performance issues at Level 2 to do with the quality of teaching or the quality of the students? *The issue is never the quality of the student. It is important that the college ensures that each student is on the right course and that they are properly supported. We addressed some of the general performance issues from 2014/15 by switching level 2 courses to alternative awarding bodies without external assessment, but this was not possible for all courses. Level 2 courses have been reformed and now have more academic content. The curriculum offer and course entry requirements are under regular review.*
- b) Should quality link governor reviews for areas for improvement be triggered by the RAG rating? *This is a good idea. We will adopt this approach to prioritising governor involvement.*
- c) What are the reasons for the stubborn under performance in GCSE English and maths? *Reasonable progress has been made in English, but maths is more of a challenge. Good teaching teams are in place and there are a range of intensive interventions for the students. This is a whole college issue and the stakes are high as options will be limited for students if they do not attain 'C' grades in English and maths.*

The governors had an extended decision on the current difficulties for students studying maths GCSE and the possible solutions. It was agreed that quality link governors should carry out a thematic visit on maths.

Actions:

- **An SLT lead and date completed column to be added to the action plan.**
- **The information added when the plan is updated to be more clearly shown.**
- **Task RAG rating to be used to trigger quality link governor visits.**
- **A quality link governor thematic visit on maths to be organised.**

8. In year progress against targets

The governors received and considered an update report on the progress against achieving the targets set by the governing body.

The governors noted that the predicted performance against targets was updated following the fourth standard monitoring assessment. The college's mid-range prediction for the overall success rate was now 85% against a target of 87%. Best case performance would mean that the target would be achieved.

9. Courses requiring improvement

The governors received and noted an update report on the courses requiring improvement.

The governors agreed that the report was presented in a helpful format.

10. Link governor reports

The governors were reminded of the importance of submitting link governor reports following each visit.

11. Budget strategy and outline budget 2016-17

The governors received and noted a report on the budget strategy and outline budget for 2016-17.

The governors were advised that the college was on track to make the savings required to achieve a balanced budget – a substantial reduction. However, the process to reduce costs and increase efficiencies would be ongoing. The anticipated surplus for 2015-16 remained at £63k.

The governors were also advised that the current assumption was that £650k would be allocated to the capital budget. This would include works to fit out the new drama studio and lecture theatre and provide a new prayer and reflection room.

The final budget plan and three year financial forecast would be submitted to the next meeting.

12. Lettings, fees and charges

The governors received and considered a report on lettings fees and charges.

Decision: the governors agreed to adopt the fees policy circulated with the agenda.

The governors were advised that there was a £75k lettings income target. The Newham Music letting would cease at the end of the academic year and the college was talking to two firms who manage lettings on behalf of schools. However, there were a number of issues to address regarding the possible use of the college by faith groups and whether hirers would be permitted to consume alcohol.

Decision: the governors agreed that discussions with the lettings firms should continue and that Terry Paul and Christopher Owens should work with the Director of Finance and Resources to consider any lettings controls or restrictions.

13. Campus masterplan update

The governors received and noted a campus masterplan update.

The governors were advised that the building should be waterproof in the next three to four weeks to allow fitting out. The main entrance would not be ready to open at the start of the academic year, so discussions were taking place with the contractor regarding a skeleton opening.

The outstanding claim from the contractor was still under discussion and the loan was now in place. The first draw down would be in July.

14. Health and safety update

The governors received and noted a health and safety update.

The governors were advised of a major incident where a contractor had been given access to a prohibited part of the building. This was viewed as a serious risk and reported to the Health and Safety Executive. Disciplinary action had been taken against the member of staff concerned.

15. Governance documents

The governors received and considered a report on the college’s governance documents. These documents had been circulated for comments ahead of being published with the agenda.

Decision: the governors agreed to:

- **Readopt the instrument and articles of government.**
- **Accept the amendments to the standing orders and code of conduct.**
- **Readopt the role descriptions for the Chair, Vice-Chair and governors.**

Several issues were raised when the documents were circulated to governors for comment and these were responded to as follows:

Issue	Response
Is the governing body too large?	The governors agreed that any review of the governing body’s composition should be put on hold until the future governance arrangements were clear
Standing Orders should reflect the governing body’s position on DBS checks	The governors agreed that DBS checks should now be carried out for all governors
Should governors’ expenses be reviewed, particularly in light of late finishing meetings?	The governors agreed that the clerk and director of finance and resources should review the governors’ expenses scheme

16. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2016 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising:

- a) Link governor reports (minute no. 15)

Christopher Owens asked whether the quality link governors could attend the senior leadership training on classroom observations. The principal agreed to consider this.

17. Minutes of the meeting of the search committee held on 22 March 2016

The governors received and noted the minutes of the search committee held on 22 March 2016.

18. Meeting dates 2015/16

The governors agreed the following meeting dates:

- Summer term development day Saturday 11 June 2016
- Summer Term 5 July 2016 at 6.30 pm