



# ***SOUTHGATE COLLEGE GOVERNING CORPORATION***

## **Governing Corporation**

### **Summary of main decisions taken at the meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009**

- 1. Accommodation Strategy**  
The Collapse of the LSC Build Project funding policy made it necessary for the College to put further design work on hold, but the planning application would go ahead
- 2. Management Accounts**  
The Governors were concerned that the management accounts continued to indicate at best a break-even year-end out-turn. The concerns in regard to the overspending in the IT department were to be fully investigated. Shah Alam, who was retiring, was thanked for his sterling work over the past ten years.
- 3. Cash Flow**  
The possibility of reduced programme and capital funding in 2009/10 was discussed, and it was agreed that it would be prudent to arrange a committed bank facility.
- 4. HR Department**  
A re-focusing and re-organisation of the work of the HR department was agreed.
- 5. College Nursery**  
The continuing deficits and under-utilisation gave concern, and discussions with alternative providers were agreed.
- 6. Tuition Fee Policy 2009/10**  
Governors reluctantly agreed the LSC requirement that fees for adult learners be increased.
- 7. Achievement of Funding Performance in 2008/09**  
Governors were cheered by the progress made towards achieving the full funding target in 2008/09.
- 8. Audit Committee Appointment**  
Sheila Dawson was appointed as an external member of the Audit Committee.
- 9. Developing College Reputation and Brand identity**  
An update on the workshops being held around the themes of College strengths and reputation was highly praised by both Student and Staff Governors.



# ***SOUTHGATE COLLEGE GOVERNING CORPORATION***

## **Governing Corporation**

### **Minutes of meeting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009**

**held in the Committee Room of Southgate House, commencing at 6.45 p.m.**

#### **PRESENT**

David Williamson (In the Chair)  
David Byrne (Principal)  
Reshma Bell (Staff member)  
Paul Camp  
James Edsberg  
Ola Fadoju (Staff member)  
Chris Gill  
Mira Gottardi (Student member)  
Meriam Benniche  
Ron Lis  
Mohamed Manjra  
Claude Pehrson  
Martin Prescott  
Ann Zinkin

#### **In Attendance**

Angélique Gainza (Vice Principal Curriculum)  
Shah Alam (Director of Finance)  
Lizzie Garn (Head of Service Transformation)  
Kit Davis (Director, Skills for Life) until item 2  
David Chaplin (Chaplin Frobisher Welling Clerks to the Corporation)  
GVA Grimley (item 1 only)

The meeting was preceded by a report from two local Police Community Support officers. They reported generally very good liaison with the College, and generally good student behaviour. However, the previous week this pattern had been disturbed by a serious incident involving two groups of students from the College, who together with former students and outsiders had taken part in a major fracas outside the College. Fortunately, in part because of an alert from the College security team and surveillance by video cameras, police officers were quickly on hand; 14 arrests had been made.

The Principal reported that 16 students had been suspended and disciplinary sanctions were in hand. Students shown to have been involved would be faced with the likely sanction of dismissal.

It was agreed to take two presentations by outside speakers at the beginning of the meeting

**1. Accommodation Strategy**

*Received: an update report from GVA Grimley*

Members received a report and presentation and recommendations for action in the light of the LSC not to accept any more building applications in the foreseeable future.

It was agreed that the College should sign off on Stage C, and that GVA Grimley would prepare a Status Report, effectively putting the project on ice, but in a position where a restart would be facilitated.

The application for Planning consent was due to be considered by the Council on April 30<sup>th</sup>; however there were still a number of objections, to be overcome, particularly from English Heritage, and it might be politic to accept a deferment in consideration now that the AIP deadline was not relevant.

The College spend to date was £1.080K, of which it was hoped to recoup £350K from LSC, leaving a potential impairment charge of £730K on the College's current year revenue account.

**2. Framework for Excellence**

Kit Davis gave a detailed presentation of the original concept of this framework which was intended to enable a comprehensive assessment and grading of the College's performance in respect of responsiveness, effectiveness and finance to be undertaken based on a nationally agreed set of key performance indicators. The overall grading on a four point scale would derive from the contributory scores for the three performance areas.

There had been concerns in the sector about the complexity and reliability of some of the measures and no overall ratings would be given in 2009. It was probable that some KPIs, particularly those relating to Finance would be withdrawn or re-written.

From the College's and Governor's point of view those indicators relating to outcomes – particularly success ratings and destination of leavers – would be very helpful in the drive to excellence

**3. Minutes of the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

*Received: Part 1 and Part 2 minutes of the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009.*

The minutes were approved as true and accurate and were signed by the Chairman.

**4. Matters arising**

4.1 Performance indicators (para 6.2). David Byrne reported that work was still going in the SMT to refine these and bring them to the summer term meeting. He was grateful for suggestions from a number of Governors.

4.2 Future Strategy (para 6.3). Pressure of events, and the need to reflect on the crisis within the LSC had made it sensible to postpone this meeting.

4.3 College Brand Development (para 6.5). James Edsberg would present an update later in the meeting (item 12)

## **5. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Andrew Nicholas and Nigel Levy.

## **6. Declaration of Governor Interest.**

No declarations had been notified

## **7. Notification of items of any other business**

There were two additional matters: appointment of an additional member of the Audit Committee and reappointment of the College's professional advisers.

## **8. Governance matters**

### **8.1 Principal's report**

*Received: Principals report of 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009*

David Byrne reported on a number of College-led initiatives :- International Women's Day celebration at Edmonton Green, North London Partnership Conference, and work with Channel 4 on an ESOL programme. In addition he had been heavily involved in the sector wide activity to obtain some clarity about future FE capital and programme funding.

Governors had taken part in a number of these meetings and activities, and reported the pride they had for the leadership, learners and staff of the College and their achievements.

### **8.2 Investors in People**

*Received: Investors in People (IiP) Review Report March 2009*

The report confirmed the improvement in staff morale since the arrival of a new Principal. It was a generally excellent report, with the assessor being "totally satisfied that Southgate College meets the requirements of the IiP National Standard" and suggesting that the College should consider seeking accreditation under the newly introduced "Higher Standard"

Governors noted as particularly relevant to their role the following recommendations:

- more frequent review of 3 year development plan
- more pro-active approach in nominating people for local or national recognition awards, and sending Chairman's letters of congratulation for especially significant achievements or anniversaries

### **8.3 Health and Safety Committee**

*Received: Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2009*

Ola Fadoju noted the comment about all staff viewing the video on manual lifting and asked that where this kind of material was helpful it be streamed on the College intranet.

## 9. Finance matters

### 9.1. Finance and Staffing Committee

*Received: minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009*

#### 9.2 Ann Zinkin gave a verbal report of the meeting held earlier in the evening.

a) The Committee had received an update report on the problems of overspend in the IT/IS department, which appeared to be more serious than at first realised. After consultation with the Chairman, and Chairmen of the F&S and Audit Committees the Principal had appointed forensic auditors to conduct a full investigation.

b) The Committee had reviewed the management accounts, which were still disappointing.

Clearly these were difficult times, and although a small budget out-turn surplus was possible, it was probable that the accounting treatment of the Building project spend reported earlier would result in a substantial deficit.

c) No final details of LSC funding allocations had yet been received, but a recent letter from the LSC had made it clear that funding would be reduced on all fronts, and setting other than a deficit budget for 2009/10 would require substantial efficiency savings.

The cash flow forecast to February 2010 showed the margin to be very tight, and in the current general economic situation the Committee were of the view that a committed funding agreement with a bank needed to be put in place, and were recommending that the Principal be authorised to negotiate this.

**It was resolved that the Principal be authorised to negotiate a committed borrowing facility.**

d) The Committee had received proposals for a fundamental re-focusing of the priorities and organisation of the HR department. Discussions were taking place with possible partners for a collaborative approach; in the interim a new structure was proposed as a basis for staff consultation.

e) The Committee had received an excellent report from the Head of Service Transformation, analyzing the usage of the Nursery, its current funding, and providing details of the charging policy and facilities of neighbouring alternative providers.

There seemed little evidence that the College facility was providing significantly for children of learners or staff, or learner child care placements that could not be equally well met by at least two independent providers close to the College.

In the Committee's view there were two options; to increase College nursery charges significantly to the market rate, or to close it and negotiate alternative provision ( with continuing subsidy from the Learner fund).

Ola Fadoju was of the view that an "in-house" provision provided significant added value in the re-assurance it offered to parents, but that the market rate be charged.

**Governors in general were of the view that negotiations with alternative providers be undertaken, and provided that these were satisfactory, the Nursery should be closed with effect from the end of the Summer term.**

### **9.3 Tuition Fee Policy for 2009/10**

*Received: Management proposals for Tuition fee policy for 2009/10*

Ann Zinkin reported that although it was not a good time to be increasing fees, and this would inevitably impact on recruitment, the Committee was of the view that LSC policy gave the College no option, and the Committee were recommending that the policy be adopted.

**It was resolved that the College Fee Policy for 2009/10, attached as an annexe to these minutes, be adopted**

### **9.4 Management Accounts**

*Received: summarised management accounts for the period ending 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009, balance sheet at that date and cash flow forecast to February 2010*

In view of the earlier discussions these were not further debated.

These would be the last accounts presented by Shah Alam, who was retiring, and he was warmly thanked by the Chairman and members for his diligence and professionalism in safeguarding the College's finance over a period of ten, often very difficult, years.

### **9.5 Funding Performance 2008/09**

*Received: Funding performance statistics as at 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009*

David Byrne was pleased to report that the latest statistics were much more encouraging, and he expected the College to achieve the overall funding target.

## **10. Academic matters**

### **Standards and Performance Committee**

*Received: notes of the inquorate meeting of the Performance and Standards Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009*

Claude Pehrson drew members attention to the continuing problems of inadequate IT and MIS systems, which presented unacceptable problems for learners, and also meant that the Committee had to seize such anecdotal evidence as was available to assure itself that the attendance and retention trends were improving.

The Vice-Principal Curriculum reported that that the attendance monitoring system was now operating and reliable; the Principal confirmed that the weaknesses in the Learner IT facilities were systemic and not capable of an easy fix, but re-iterated his determination to resolve the problems by the start of the new academic year

## **11. Audit Committee**

*Received: minutes of the Audit Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009*

Mohamed Manjra reported that the Committee had been attended as an observer by Sheila Dawson; she clearly had the qualifications and experience to make a major contribution to the work of the Committee and he hoped Governors would see fit to appoint her (see 12.1 below).

The Committee had received a report from the Internal Auditor on the first audit visit of the current cycle. The Committee had found it difficult to understand the audit opinion descriptors and had asked for a better explanation at the next meeting.

The Committee had reviewed the Risk Register. Whilst this was comprehensive in range, it was not systematic in recording action taken to mitigate or control risk; a fully documented Risk Policy was required.

## **12. College Brand Development**

James Edsberg updated Members on the workshops and interviews currently being held in the College. Learner and Staff workshops had been undertaken along with some telephone interviews with local schools. Themes were starting to emerge on key strengths which included Inclusivity, Positive Culture and Location as well as areas for development such as Communication, Image/Reputation and Facilities. Feedback was continuing to be collated to inform value propositions and the next phase of the project was to test and validate these to identify a brand. A governor workshop was planned for June/July as part of the project.

## **13. Other urgent business**

### **13.1 Audit Member appointment**

Sheila Dawson had recently retired from a key financial role at the London Borough of Enfield, where her outstanding work had been known to many Governors.

**It was resolved that Sheila Dawson be appointed an external member of the Audit Committee with immediate effect**

### **13.2 Professional Appointments**

Ann Zinkin expressed her concern at the quality of help received from some of the College advisers. She felt that a joint meeting of the Finance and Staffing and Audit Committees be held to review, and if necessary re-tender, all professional appointments.

### **13.3 Smoking on Campus**

Ola Fadoju asked if the message to all staff about the importance of challenging smokers could be re-issued.

## **14. Future meetings**

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2009 at 18.30 hrs

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm.