

**Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting
Held on Tuesday, 13 October, 2009 at 6.30 pm**

Present: Mr Peter Alcock
Mrs Margaret Buckley
Mr Brian Coxhead
Fr Paul Glover
Mr Liam Goulding
Mr Gerry Hill
Mr Rod Hill, *Chair*
Dr John Humphreys
Mr Donal McCormack
Mr Mike Nencini
Mr Rob Peacock, *Principal*
Mr Karl Smith
Fr Felix Stephens OSB
Mrs Helen Stevenson
Dr Christine Tyler

In attendance: Miss Rosie Woods, *College Chaplain, for the Opening Prayer*
Mr Nick Burnham, *Vice Principal*
Mrs Michelle Williams, *Director of Resources*

Mr John Perry, *Clerk*
Mrs Alison Fishwick, *Minuting Clerk*

Observer: Mr George Baldry

Before the meeting commenced the Chair welcomed the Student Governor, Mr. Goulding to the meeting and Mr. Baldrey who was attending as an observer.

The meeting opened with a Prayer led by the College Chaplain.

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Apologies

Apologies received from Miss Kath Boullen and Mr John Fogarty.
Governors learned that Miss Boullen was recovering well after her recent operation and sent their good wishes.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of 23 June, 2009

The Minutes of the meeting were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- (a) Add 'Fr Felix Stephens OSB' under those listed as *Present*.
- (b) Agenda Item 7 - *The Financial Forecast and Commentary 2009-2012* - "£9,195" under bullet point one should read "£9,195k".
- (c) Agenda Item 14 - *Proposed Calendar of Governors' Meetings for 2009-10* - Full Governing Body meeting should read "Monday, 6th December, 2010" not "Monday, 7th December, 2010".

4. Matters Arising

Agenda Item 5 - Fair Trade Foundation Approval

The Chaplain was delighted to report that the College had achieved Fair Trade status and this was on first application. This is as a result of a tremendous effort by all concerned, in particular the Justice and Peace Group. Governors congratulated the College on this achievement.

5. Principal's Report, including Summer Exam results

The Principal, in summarising his report, commented that overall it had been a very good year for Carmel culminating in excellent examination results. The Principal added that many institutions, including those in the independent sector, had experienced a fall in examination results this year at AS Level whereas Carmel had seen a slight rise. The College will be investigating what has caused this.

In respect of Applied A Levels, Governors noted that these subjects are now moving in the right direction. The Level 2 programme however is still a cause for concern; students are not performing to the same level as the rest of the College. A review of provision for this cohort of students is planned.

The Principal reported that recruitment to the College is buoyant; the College is currently 37 students over target. Governors were reminded that the 37 will not be funded. Overall the situation is very encouraging alongside this feedback regarding the new build has also been positive.

The Principal invited questions from Governors:

- a. Governors asked about the reduction in Year 0 recruitment. The Principal explained that although the College has recruited fewer students than last year, the College has slightly exceeded its target (Target 75 - Recruited 80) however, the universities themselves have had to be more rigorous in their recruitment. Although the College is disappointed with the numbers, particularly with the Medicine/Dentistry programme, there is no evidence of trend as it is the first year of decline. The Principal explained that both the University and the College are looking at more effective ways of promoting the programmes.
- b. Governors enquired about the College's aim to recruit specialist tutors for General RE and questioned the cost of this bearing in mind the current financial position. The Principal responded that the appointment of specialist tutors would be a gradual long term aim and recognises the cost implication. However, on a positive note the Principal reported that the cessation of the OCNW accredited programme has allowed the College to offer a more challenging and appropriate General RE course. The original programme received very low approval rating from students.
- c. Governors referred to *5.2 Student Numbers by Subject, Year and Level* and questioned the number of students studying Critical Thinking at A2 (37) compared to 200 recruited at AS. The Vice

Principal explained that the 37 students are from the first year when it was introduced on a smaller scale; these same students are now going through to their second year. Critical Thinking is now offered to all students in the Gifted and Talented cohort hence the 200; it is mandatory in their first year and elective in their second.

- d. Governors referred to the low numbers in Economics (32) at AS with only 4 progressing to A2. The Teacher Governor, who is also Head of Faculty for this area, explained that Economics was introduced for the first time last year and marketing the course was late hence the small numbers. However this year there are two groups at AS level.
- e. Governors asked how many students have progressed from Level 2 to Level 3. The Vice Principal responded that 9 students from the 16 on the GCSE programme are still at Carmel, however further analysis is required on this. The Principal added that one of the priorities for this year is to explore the cost effectiveness of the Level 2 programme, whether it is the right programme for this particular cohort of students and, if not, should the College explore alternative programmes such as BTEC. Governors added that the College should also look at this cohort's progression to other Colleges.
- f. Governors noted that on Page 26 one of the items from the Legend (Associated/Linked High Schools) was not visible on the Line Graph.
- g. Governors referred to a likely increase in class sizes to cope with the any future decrease in revenue funding. The Principal commented that the College is not keen on large class size; currently class size at Carmel is in line with that in other sixth form colleges. The Corporate Management Team plan to explore efficiencies across the College. Governors asked whether the College would consider withdrawing subjects or increasing class sizes. The Principal responded that sometimes it is not in the best interest for students to withdraw subjects as it is about providing a range of opportunities.
- h. The Principal agreed to include the financial status of the College in next year's *Principal's Report to Governors*.

The Principal took Governors through the *Priorities for 2009/10* reiterating that the key challenge, as always, is to ensure the delivery of the best possible service to students in all aspects of College life.

- i. In respect of Priority 5, relating to the College remaining pro-active in the 14-19 Strategic Partnership and to maintaining and developing positive relationships with the Local Authority during the machinery of government changes, Governors asked who would control future recruitment and would the College have to change their intake. The Principal explained that it is understood that all learners will have the right to "Travel to Learn", however the boroughs will no doubt be under pressure to retain their own students so there may be some tensions here. The College will however continue to maintain and develop the positive relationships with the Local Authority during this period of change.

- j. The Principal confirmed that *Destinations 2009* will be available for Governors at the next Full Governing Body Meeting.

Governors wished to express their thanks to all staff at the College for the consistency of performance over the years. The Chair commented that Governors should note the changing climate but also how the Corporate Management Team had identified the future priorities in order to keep abreast of these changes.

Governors noted the contents of the report.

6. The Machinery of Government Changes: The Implications for Carmel College

A position paper on Designation from the Sixth Form Colleges Forum was tabled. The Clerk explained that at the Governing Body meeting in December Governors will be required to make a formal decision regarding the future status of the College and gave the background. The deadline for a decision is 18th December, 2009.

Sixth form colleges may choose to be part of a distinct sector, separate from schools and General FE Colleges and will remain corporate institutions with governance arrangements similar to current status. From April 2010 Sixth Form Colleges will fall under the local authority umbrella and they will have the new statutory responsibility for commissioning all 14-19 education, in addition to the responsibility for performance managing. Sixth Form Colleges which choose to be part of the General FE sector will be re-classed as General FE Colleges and will be performance managed by the new Skills Funding Agency.

The definition of a Sixth Form College equates to at least 80% of provision for 16-19 year olds. Under this status Carmel will still be able to deliver Year 0 courses. General FE status would be independent from the Local Authority and would be classed as non-traditional sixth form provision. There will also be lower benchmarks set for performance.

Governors noted that when sixth form colleges became incorporated they were funded at the time by the Further Education Funding Council whose remit was to ensure that Colleges competed with each other through the choice and quality of provision offered to the learner. When the Learning and Skills Council replaced the FEFC the focus changed to ensuring that national targets (e.g. literacy and numeracy) were met by regional target contracts; there has, however, been a lack of co-ordinated approach to 14-19 provision regionally and a disparity of funding between schools and colleges.

On cessation of the LSC in 2010 the Local Authorities will have overall responsibility for all 14-19 provision in their area, with the exception of Academies. The YPLA (Young People's Learning Agency) will provide the funding for the local authorities. The local authorities will be charged with regional sub-groups to act as 'referees' to the system, for example, when recruiting from outside the borough. Any differences will be presented to the YPLA. Consultation is presently underway on how this process will work.

The Clerk took Governors through the key issues as listed.

Governors requested that a paper be prepared with guidance from the College on the choice of status outlining the Pros and Cons of each in order to enable the Governors to challenge the position and reach a collective decision. It was requested that the paper be circulated early in December, and before the Full Governing Body papers are circulated, to allow sufficient time for Governors to consider the matter and debate further at the Full Governing Body Meeting on the 8th. Governors were invited to contact individual members of the Corporate Management Team if they so wished in order to answer any questions.

Governors were also keen that the good relationships developed with the Local Authority are maintained. The Principal added that it makes sense that Sixth Form Colleges link with the Local Authorities as it provides an opportunity to influence.

Governors noted the Report.

7. Risk Management

The Corporate Management Team had reviewed the Risk Register and Risk Management Action Plan in line with College Policy and Governors noted the items that had been added to the Action Plan.

Governors noted the Report.

8. Progress on the New Build, including the Confidential Minutes of the Accommodation Working Party meeting on 23 September, 2009

Phase One

The Principal was delighted with progress to date; there were no real issues to report although the decreasing contingency fund is a concern. Building 3 of Phase 1 is currently underway and it is hoped to take possession on 2 July 2010.

Phase Two

- a. The Principal reported that it is clear that the College will not receive any funds from external sources for Phase 2. However, the Accommodation Working Party did not wish to abandon the 'vision' for the College and proposed to recommend the development an alternative strategy which can be completed in stages depending on the availability of resources, although it was understood that it may take longer to realise the vision.
- b. The Principal will be meeting with a contact at the University of Liverpool to discuss possible HEFC funding.
- c. The College has met with AA Projects and have asked them how much it would be to produce a property strategy which would include a plan and breakdown of costs.
- d. The Principal reiterated to Governors the outcome of the meeting with Shaun Woodward MP who suggested that it would be better to present a 'solution' to the problem to the Secretary of State at the

DCSF rather than just the problem although as yet there is no solution.

- e. The College had explored alternative sources of funding including sale of land. The land is owned by the Archdiocese and is in any case on green belt. Other suggestions included issuing of bonds.
- f. It is clear that finances will be tight in the future and it is hoped that, in order to keep costs down, the planned cost of an alternative strategy would fall below the tender threshold of £30k.
- g. The Principal confirmed that, in order to ensure some sense of coherency, AA Projects will include statutory compliance within their plan costs and this will form part of the proposals.
- h. Governors enquired as to whether the College had made any progress in respect of exploring savings. The Principal responded that in addition to the benchmarking exercise undertaken by the Director of Resources, the Corporate Management Team have planned an Away Day in December to analyse different areas for efficiency gains. Governors felt that a 10% reduction in college budgets may be a worthwhile exercise as it forces budget holders to consider what they can do without and helps to focus peoples' minds. Governors noted that there will be national efficiencies of 2% next year. The Chair added that it was also an opportunity to look at non-cash items. The Principal commented that the Corporate Management Team will take into account the 2% national efficiencies whilst looking at ways of improving the revenue position. The quality of provision will be reviewed in the light of possible reduction in resources and increase in class sizes. **The Principal agreed to present a progress report on the College's investigations for the Governing Body meeting in December, the content of which will be considered further by the Governing Body at their Strategic Planning sessions in January 2010.**

Governors wished to place on record their appreciation of the Phase 1 development, in particular the work of the Project Sponsor and the Clerk of Works. The Governors also wished to formally express their appreciation of the work of the Corporate Management Team. Governors noted the Minutes of the Accommodation Working Party

9. Liverpool Archdiocesan Schools' Voluntary Contribution Scheme Annual Report

Governors discussed the level of service provided by the Liverpool Archdiocesan Schools' Department to primary and secondary education in contrast to the limited service provided to Carmel and asked, given the future financial constraints, whether the annual fee should be halved to reflect that level. The Clerk commented that Carmel is very much part of the Archdiocese community and reminded Governors of the support provided in the appointment of Principal and Vice Principal. Indeed, whenever the College has asked for support the Archdiocese Schools' Department has provided it. Governors suggested that perhaps the College should explore what further help the Department could offer.

Governors noted the Annual Report and approved the voluntary payment of £3100 to the Department for 2009-10 but agreed to review annually.

10. College Calendar 2010/11

The Principal reported on the consultation taking place by St Helens Local Authority which aims to introduce a common timetable across the borough. Although those who responded to the consultation were mainly in agreement with the proposals set out the dates have yet to be formally approved. The proposals included fixing a spring holiday so that there was equal spacing between the Christmas, half term, "Easter" and Whit periods. This would however place the "Easter" holiday out of step with Holy Week and mean a loss of teaching days.

The Principal asked for approval for the Autumn Term dates at this stage as additional time will be required to discuss with staff the format for the remainder of the academic year and how the lost teaching days can be regained.

Governors approved the Autumn Term dates proposed.

11. Report from the Association of Catholic Sixth Form Colleges (ACVIC) Annual Conference October 2009

This paper was tabled. The Principal took Governors through the key areas discussed at the recent conference which was attended by both the Principal and Chair of Governors.

In respect of the matter relating to the EHRC and clarification of the admissions criteria, the Principal reported that the CES took advice from counsel as to how Colleges should respond. To-date there has been no response from the EHRC. The general opinion of Colleges at the Conference was to sit and wait for the next development.

One of the topics discussed at the Conference was Mission Statements and Governors raised the question as to whether it was time to review Carmel's, in particular the Vision Statement which one Governor felt leaned more towards the ethos of the College rather than the academic. Governors agreed that some time needed to be set aside to explore this further and provide an opportunity for all staff to contribute. It was agreed to postpone any discussions until the next Academic Year.

Governors noted the report.

12. Priority for Recruitment and Admissions Policy

Governors considered the revised document and requested that the words under 2.1 Conditions of offer (e) be removed and be replaced with wording which made reference to the College's Safeguarding Students/Vulnerable Adults Policy; once amended the Policy will then be subject to the Chair's approval.

The Clerk requested names of Governors who wished to join the Appeals Committee.

Committee Reports for Approval

Governors approved the Minutes of the following meetings:

- 13. **Report of the Search Committee, 23 June, 2009**
- 14. **Report of the Personnel & Quality Assurance Committee, 15 September, 2009**
- 15. **Report of the Finance, Estates & Marketing Committee, 23 September, 2009**
- 16. **Report of the Audit Committee, 29 September, 2009**
- 17. **Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2008-09**
- 18. **Revised Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee**

The Clerk reported that the Audit Committee had reviewed its Terms of Reference at its last meeting and proposed amendments designed to allow for more flexible committee membership. **Governors approved the Audit Committee's revision of its Terms of Reference.**

19. Any Other Business

The Chair wished to take the opportunity to remark on the quality of papers prepared by the College for presentation at Governing Body meetings and wished to place on record the Governing Body's appreciation, especially for the quality of Mrs Fishwick's work in minuting the Governing Body and its committees.

20. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, 8 December, 2009 at 6.30 pm** as previously agreed. However, to accommodate those members of the Board who have expressed difficulty in arriving in time for a 6.30 pm start, it was agreed to formulate the Agenda in such a way so that the main business of the Governing Body is discussed from 7.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Signed by the Chair:

On this day: