

**Notes of the South Bank Colleges Board Strategy Day
held at 1pm – 5pm on Thursday, 6 June 2024**

in Board room, Clapham campus, Lambeth Gateway College

Present

Ruth Farwell (Chair)
Steve Balmont
Sue Dare
Nigel Duckers
Issa Issa (items 1-4)
David Phoenix

Apologies

Andrew Owen
Thesia Kouloungou
Mario Meizah
Mee Ling Ng
Romy Jones

In attendance

Sam Curtis
Chris Knell
Monica Marongiu
Fiona Morey
Jacqueline Mutibwa
Ian Rule
Wayne Wright
Ruth Spellman
Rychard Scrase-Field, Group Director Estates (item 2)
Alex Kendall, Dean Law and Social Sciences, LSBU (item 7)
Katerina Kolyva, CEO, Education and Training Foundation (item 6)
Peter Ryder, Rockborn (observer)

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed the trustees to the meeting. The Chair also welcomed Ruth Spellman the newly appointed trustee (from 1 August 2024) and Chris Knell the newly appointed CFO and Vice-Principal to their first Board meeting. The above apologies were noted.

The Board noted that the transfer of SBC facilities management services to Mitie FM Ltd had taken place on 1 June 2024 and had gone well. The Board thanked Rychard Scrase-Field, Group Director Estates and his team for the achievement and regular updates on the contract performance would be provided to the Board.

2. SBC Estates Development

The Board discussed the Phase 2 estates development.

3. Finances - 2023/24 budget performance and draft 2024/25 budget – Discussion led by Ian Rule, Interim CFO

2023/24 budget performance

The mid-year budget position (period 6) showed a forecast deficit position of £1.2m due to an overspend on pay budgets (agency staff and ALS team) and an adverse variance in forecasted income. The Board was concerned about the budget performance and the uncertainty of delivering the agreed budget.

The Board discussed the management accounts for April and May 2024 (which were not available at the last Board meeting in May 2024). The Board received an update on the budget performance and an explanation on the variances as at 31 May 2024:

- the budget performance had improved mainly due to staff costs that had gone down and the additional income related to Additional Learning Support (ALS).
- the Executive were aware of the causes of the variances, and the budget risks could be mitigated including the 2023/24 forecasted income from internal delivery of GLA and ESFA contracts which would be fully delivered and would bring the overall budget position back on track (original budget position of £1.3m deficit).
- the full year forecast showed that the budgeted operating deficit position of £1.3m would be achieved although there could be a variance of £200k either way.

On the April management accounts, the Board asked about the movement in staff costs between March and April which showed a negative variance of £650k. The variance was related to the pay award. The key risks to delivering the agreed budget were discussed. Tighter budgetary controls over staff recruitment and the use of agency staff was needed. Although there were some improvements, more work needed to be done. The controls and purchase ordering processes, especially those pertaining to the recruitment of agency staff, would be considered for an audit review by the Audit Committee to ensure that the control environment is sufficiently robust. There was also a risk related to the performance on financial contribution.

The Board would be provided with monthly management accounts outside its formal meetings.

Draft 2024/25 budget

The outline budget for 2024/25 had been presented to the Board at its last meeting in May 2024. The Board discussed the key assumptions, the delivery of the financial KPIs targets set out in the report and the associated risks. The key risks to delivering the 2024/25 budget were around some income streams such as loans funded provision

and tuition fees. Also, the planned decant at Clapham would have an impact on the budget and there was a need for contingency. The expenses associated with the Clapham decant campus had been factored in the budget.

The Board supported the 2024/25 draft budget and emphasised that it should deliver a break-even operating position. **Executive confirmed that that 2024/25 draft budget would deliver a break-even operating position and that a report on the budget risks i.e. how the risks would be addressed in the budget in order to deliver the proposed budget would be presented to the Board.**

4. Ofsted update and meeting skill needs – Presentation by Fiona Morey, Executive Principal

Ofsted (strategy 2022-27) had introduced a further inspection of FE Colleges that would focus on how colleges are meeting skills needs. SBC's inspection on the new "skills measure" was expected before Easter 2025.

FE providers should be contributing effectively to meeting the skills needs of employers and the local, regional and national economy through the curriculum programme delivered and engagement and collaboration with employers and stakeholders.

There was discussion about how the colleges would be inspected on their contribution to meeting the skills needs, the evaluation criteria that would be used to judge the contribution to meeting skills needs and some examples of a strong contribution were noted.

A further update on the Ofsted inspection and preparation work would be the focus of the Board development session in July 2024.

5. A Group approach to curriculum design and delivery – Presentation by Fiona Morey, Executive Principal

The Board discussed LSBU group of educational institutions vision and its purpose to create educational opportunities for learners, by easing the paths between different levels of education.

There was discussion about the group curriculum strategy and its objectives which were shaped by national priorities (economic policy initiatives) and drivers which meet the needs and aspirations of students, employers and wider communities. The curriculum had also been developed to support the progression of the subject pathways across the group. The group educational pathways were noted. The Board discussed the students' progression rate from FE to HE, their performance and what the group could do to improve the student experience.

6. Systems Leadership and Key matters affecting FE - Discussion led by Dr Katerina Kolyva, CEO, Education and Training Foundation

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) published a report (May 2024) on building a sustainable and self-improving FE sector. The Further Education and Skills: Changing systems of change report which explored the challenges and opportunities facing the FE and Skills sector. This was in response to the government skills agenda and the challenges on shortages in skills and quality. The Board discussed the outcomes of the report and the implications for the SBC Board in terms of staff expertise.

There was discussion about the changes in the external environment in which the FE sector operates i.e. the economic climate, technology, political priorities and demographics and the threats and opportunities. The role of the FE and skills sector in both leading and responding to the changes that would enable meet the national skills agenda. A system change capable of continuously improving its practices and infrastructure to better meet the needs of learners, the job market and wider society was needed.

There was also discussion about the quality of teaching and learning, teachers' professional development and the lack of a national defined standard or expectation and the impact on learners. The ongoing professional development of teachers was important for education quality and learners' outcomes but also to improve teacher satisfaction and retention. Improving teaching and learning was about meeting quality standards and its impact on learners. How do we measure the impact of teaching and learning?

The ETF was the FE sector enabler, working in collaboration with colleges, sector leaders and policy makers. The role of ETF in fostering quality, supporting career progression and professional development. It supported the FE sector create a workforce of highly skilled teachers, address the skills gaps and the recruitment and retention challenges.

The Board noted its views and that it should balance the time spent on quality of teaching and learning with that on finance and the estates strategy. Considerations should be looked at in the lens of quality. Teachers should be supported in their career progression and having a professional body that raises the profile on teachers' development framework was helpful. The challenge concerning the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers was noted. The staff trustee's views on the matter were noted. The Executive would progress the areas on workforce development, offering support to teachers throughout their careers. The Board asked whether SBC had a workforce strategy and whether it addresses the recruitment and retention challenges.

On leadership and governance CPD, quality and learning should be embedded in the board development and effectiveness activities. The uniqueness of the LSBU group model, its innovation and shared best practices on quality of education and improving progression pathways were noted.

7. Education Group Career Pathways (Teach with LSBU) – Presentation by Alex Kendall, Dean Law and Social Sciences, LSBU

The Board discussed the LSBU new level 5 FE teaching qualification starting in September 2024. The offer would be extended to levels 6 and 7. This was in response to the government skills agenda (employability needs set out in its strategy and policies) and also aligned with local (LSIP), regional and national skills priority areas.

The Board discussed the strategic vision for 'Teach with LSBU' and its aim to widen access by providing a diverse range of entry points into teaching that provide professional identity building and progression for the local community and also provide clear CPD pathways for teachers (all phases, all career stages) within the LSBU group to support recruitment and retention ('grow our own') and positioning LSBU as a teacher employer of choice.

The education model was aligned with South London Partnership local skills priority areas and on the national context, it was well positioned to meet the national needs.

There was discussion about the courses offered, curriculum taught, different routes into teaching, LSBU group pedagogies, integrated pathways, training opportunities and qualification framework for the teaching qualifications. The opportunities and benefits for the LSBU group were noted.

The skills shortage in teaching was a challenge for SBC and the group and the course would help address the recruitment and retention challenges.

8. Any other business

The Board noted that LSBU had been ranked 3rd in the world for reducing inequality in the Times Higher Impact Rankings 2024. The Board thanked staff for the achievement.

The Board noted that Ian Rule, Interim CFO would be leaving SBC in June 2024. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Ian for the significant work he had undertaken to improve SBC's financial performance and for his service and contribution to the Board and the College and wished him well in his future endeavours.