

**Minutes of the meeting of the South Bank Colleges Board
held at 4.00pm on Thursday, 9 May 2024
in Board room, Clapham campus, Gateway College**

Present

Ruth Farwell (Chair)
Steve Balmont
Sue Dare
Nigel Duckers
Issa Issa
Mario Meizah
Mee Ling Ng
David Phoenix

Apologies

Andrew Owen
Thesia Kouloungou

In attendance

Sam Curtis
Monica Marongiu
Fiona Morey
Jacqueline Mutibwa
Ian Rule
Wayne Wright
Peter Ryder, Rockborn (observer)
Henry Robson, SU Member (observer)

1. Appointment of Trustees

At its meeting of 18 April 2024, the Group Nomination Committee discussed board vacancies across the group boards. It discussed the independent and LSBU nominee trustee positions on SBC Board. Jacqui Dyer's first term as an independent trustee nominated by Lambeth Council would end on 5 May 2024. Andrew Owen, Vice-Chair and Chair of Audit Committee would be stepping down on 31 July 2024 (2nd term of 18 months from 1 February 2023). The Board discussed the recommendations proposed by the Group Nomination Committee.

The Board approved the appointment of:

- Issa Issa as an "independent trustee" nominated by Lambeth Council on the SBC Board to replace Jacqui Dyer from 6 May 2024 for a four-year term;
- Sue Dare as the new Vice-Chair of the SBC Board from 1 August 2024; and

[Sue Dare and Issa Issa joined the meeting]

- Ruth Spellman as an “LSBU trustee” on the SBC Board to replace Andrew Owen from 1 August 2024 for a four-year term.

2. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed the trustees to the meeting. The Chair also welcomed Cllr Issa Issa, the newly appointed Lambeth Council nominee on the SBC Board to his first meeting and noted his background and close working relationship with the college and the local community. She also welcomed Peter Ryder, Rockborn Management Consultants and Henry Robson, prospective candidate for SU President who were attending the meeting as observers. The above apologies were noted.

Board members had just participated in a lesson visit. The activity was followed by a discussion about student achievement i.e. the predicted 2023/24 achievement against KPIs, associated risks and mitigations.

3. Declaration of Interests

Sue Dare and Issa Issa had declared an interest in agenda item 1 on the appointment of trustees and did not participate in the discussion.

There was no other declaration of interest in any other item on the agenda.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024 as an accurate record and their publication, as redacted.

5. Matters arising

The Board noted the update on matters arising from the previous meetings and board development sessions. Most actions had been completed or were being progressed and are still ongoing. Actions being progressed would remain on the action sheet.

On the IFM contract, an update on the performance reporting and the KPI management had been provided to the Board. The reporting of the contract performance would be quarterly via the Accounting Officer’s report where performance issues or risks would be brought to the attention of the Board.

The updated Single Equality Scheme 2023/24 would be circulated to trustees by the end of May 2024.

Further discussion would take place outside the meeting between the Executive Principal and Nigel Duckers to demonstrate that the annual review of safeguarding status was widely understood. Trustees would be notified by the Clerk about the requirements on them.

6. Update from the Students' Union President

The Students Union (SU) President gave a report on the recent and upcoming activities. Recent SU activities included International Women's Day celebrations and motivational speakers had been invited to the event which also entailed a fund-raising event for a local charity. LGBTQ+ club meetings offered a safer space to talk about issues. Student welfare initiatives to support student well-being and mental health have been launched.

The SU President gave an update on the 2024/25 pre-election activities, elections would take place in June 2024.

Upcoming activities included a mental health and well-being awareness event to support students manage stress and anxiety, especially around the examination period. The annual student conference would be held in May 2024.

The SU work programme included student welfare initiatives to address emerging needs and challenges faced by students, reviewing student activities to ensure that they cater for a broader range of student interests and improving communication to ensure effective dissemination of information and engagement with the student body.

The SU President would engage with the LSBU SU President on approaches to engaging a broader range of students, providing pastoral support to students on progression and common issues faced by both student bodies.

7. Executive Principal's Report (Update on LSBTC and LGC reports)

The Board noted the key matters since its last meeting in February 2024.

- 2023/24 in year predicted achievement was positive, though below KPI target. Areas of high risk included Creative and digital arts and GCSE English and maths. Apprenticeships achievement was still low, and the provision was being monitored by the ESFA.
- 2023/24 attendance performance was still below target (80% against a target of 90%), English and maths and tutorial sessions remained a challenge. Targeted interventions had been put in place with some positive impact and there were positive indicators with marked improvement in some areas., There was still more work to be done and would be kept under review. Decreasing attendance had been reported nationally at all levels of education.
- 2023/24 in year recruitment and retention was positive and the budget was likely to be achieved. Apprenticeship targets had not been met. On 2024/25 applications, 16-19 year olds current figures were positive (37% up) and adult applications were in line with figures this time last year.

- The key risks facing the College relate to the decant programme and its impact on the delivery of teaching and student retention. There was also an achievement risk concerning LSBTC study programme especially in English and Maths for 16-19 year olds and Creative and digital arts where performance was predicted to drop, interventions were in place to address the risk though the desired impact had not yet been achieved.
- An update on Safeguarding and Prevent Monitoring for term 2 2023/24 and the initiatives and activities that promote and support safeguarding and welfare at SBC. There were 61 new safeguarding disclosures during Term 2 2024, mental health remains the highest disclosure type (29%) followed by gangs & youth violence and housing/homelessness.
- Staff sickness and its impact on student achievement and funding, this was in light of the staffing/ agency cost overspend and the £250k Princes Trust activity. A report on managing staff sickness would be presented to the Board at its next meeting in July 2024 (under Executive Principal's report). The report would include the sickness absence policy, FE benchmarking data around long-term sickness and management information report and KPIs.
- The initiatives that would help address the challenges concerning staff recruitment. DfE's Levelling Up Premium Payments fund aimed at supporting recruitment of staff in the hard to recruit areas. There was also the LSBU group new level 5 teaching qualification for staff recruited without a teaching qualification starting in September 2024.
- LSBTC and LGC performance against 2023/24 educational and financial KPIs targets which were progressing well. The updates on the developments at the colleges including the external stakeholder engagement activities.

2024/25 Curriculum Offer

The Board discussed the proposed 2024/25 curriculum offer which was based on the LSBU group and College strategic plans, developed to meet key stakeholders' needs and aligned to local, regional and national skills priority areas.

The proposed plan focused on continued growth and development of level 3 and 4 offer at LSBTC including T levels, apprenticeships, Higher Technical Qualifications and employability programmes. The new courses were noted, in particular the Entry level and level 1 'Gateway plus' courses linked to vocational pathways and designed to support progression to LSBTC.

There was an update on the proposal to relocate Lambeth culinary and patisserie courses to LSBU within the National Bakery School (NBS) from 2024 as part of the decant strategy. The patisserie offer would relocate to the NBS from September 2024. The relocation of the culinary offer was still a challenge, and options continue to be explored but this area was under review for 2024/25. On the situation

concerning Performing Arts, the relocation options and business plan were still being explored, and it was included in the plan.

The Group Educational Pathways (12) were noted and well received by internal and external stakeholders.

The Board approved the proposed 2024/25 curriculum offer (appendix A) noting that whether the culinary offer would be included in the 2024/25 plan was under review.

ESFA 2024/25 Accountability Agreement

The Board discussed the Accountability Agreement that FE colleges are required to submit to the ESFA. The document would be amended to include comments received from the Board regarding the 2024/25 objectives, EDI targeted cohorts and the typographical errors. The Board approved the ESFA Accountability Agreement 2024/25 subject to the amendments being made. The document would be submitted to EFSA by the 31 May 2024 and published on SBC website in the Autumn term.

8. Accounting Officer's Report

The Board discussed the key matters since its last meeting in February 2024.

The Board discussed:

- an update on Phase 2 Blocks B and D projects. The tenders for the construction of Block B and the truncated D scheme had been returned which showed a budget shortfall of around £6.5m which was unaffordable. The delivery options were being explored due to the challenge concerning Block D. The FE Capital Transformation Fund (FECTF) grant of £10.5m would be lost if it was not built and the site would still require the building of a new sub-station which would otherwise have been in Block D. Also discussions with DfE would be required if block D was not progressed. If the scheme is delayed there was a risk of losing the FECTF grant of £10.5m. There were discussions with DfE about extending the funding deadline to the end of the 2024/25 financial year (March 2025). DfE may also provide additional support and contribute to the 10% inflationary costs of £1m. The capital grant would be secured following LPA consent on the development of the scheme.
- an update on the Integrated Facility Management (IFM) contract. Staff would be TUPEd to Mitie FM Ltd to deliver the SBC aspects of the contract from 1 June 2024.

David Phoenix left the meeting

9. Chief Financial Officer Report

The Board discussed 2023/24 budget performance and the outline budget for 2024/25.

The Board discussed:

- the year to date position as at 31 March 2024 (period 8) which showed an adverse variance of £1.2m against budget. YTD income showed a £1.2m positive variance compared to budget which was due to in-year growth funding. Staff costs showed an overspend of £1.2m related to Additional Learning Support (ALS) and agency staffing. The non-staff costs also showed an overspend of £300k.
- an update on work being undertaken by SLT since the last meeting to mitigate the budget risks and bring the overall budget position back on track (original budget position of £1.3m deficit). Staff costs were a challenge and were closely being monitored. The non-staff costs are being controlled and also other income streams needed to be considered. Performance on financial contribution rates showed a further improvement compared to last year and closer to target.
- the outline budget for 2024/25 which was based on the key assumptions and financial KPIs targets set out in the report. The draft budget would be discussed in detail at the Board Strategy Day in June 2024.

The Board was concerned about the budget risk and the uncertainty of delivering the agreed budget. The April 2024 management accounts would be circulated to the trustees for scrutiny in order to have a better understanding of the financial situation and whether there was an indication that costs were being controlled. The 2023/24 budget performance and the draft 2024/25 budget would be discussed further at the Board Strategy Day in June 2024. The budget for 2024/25 should consider alternative scenarios in relation to the position regarding the estates development and, for example, whether continuing to use the current Clapham site would result in additional costs.

Update on Internal Auditors Tender

The Board noted an update on the tender for internal auditors. The four firms that had expressed an interest in the contract for internal audit services had FE sector experience and the information would be shared with the Audit Committee Members. The appointment of an internal auditor was planned for June 2024 and the contract would commence in August 2024.

10. Health & Safety Annual Report 2022/23

The Board noted an update on the progress made on health and safety for the period September 2022 to August 2023.

11. Any other business

There was no other business.

**Date of next meeting
4.00 pm on Thursday, 11 July 2024**

Confirmed as a true record

(Chair)

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