BIRKBECK
University of London

Minutes of the meeting of the GOVERNORS

18 March 2010

Present:
Mr Garth Pollard (in the chair),
Mr Richard Agutter, Mr John Biggs, Mr Richard Clarke, Dr Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick,
Ms Susie Hodge, Mr Tom Hoffman, Professor David Latchman, Mr Drummond Leslie,
Mrs. Joy Manners, Professor Michael Oaksford, Ms Tami Peterson,
Mr Sean Rillo Raczka, Mr Paul Shelton, Ms Shrupti Shah,
Professor Julian Swann, Dr Ruth Thompson.

By invitation:
Mr Robert Allison.

In attendance:
Mrs. Katharine Bock (Deputy Clerk to the Governors), Mr Keith Harrison (Secretary and Clerk to
the Governors), Mr David McGhie (Director of Planning), Mr Peter Westley (Director of Finance).

Apologies for absence:
Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge, Mr John Poggioli, Professor Philip Dewe.

30 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS
Noted:
30.1 Governors were asked to disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest in relation to
the matters listed on the Agenda. No substantive conflicts were identified. Mr Allison
noted a consultancy arrangement with KPMG, the College’s external auditor.

31 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES
Confirmed:
31.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 26 November 2009.

Noted:
31.2 In relation to Minute 10.6, recording Governors’ discussion of the need to ensure a good
quality of student experience at the same time as moving towards a more cost effective
staff: student ratio, the academic staff Governors also noted the link between these issues
and staff workload.

32 MASTER’S REPORT
Noted:
32.1 Following negotiations on the level of compensation payable to Birkbeck from the
University of London for moving out of Senate House North Block, including discussion
with the University Board of Trustees in January 2010, the University had offered a sum of
£600K.

Agreed:
32.2 Governors agreed that the College should accept this offer and thanked the
Master for his tenacity in negotiating a fair settlement.
32.3 The Independent Review of Fees and Funding led by Lord Browne continued. Birkbeck had submitted evidence jointly with the Open University emphasising the need to address part time issues and ensure flexibility between part time and full time modes of study. The College would also make a joint submission with the OU for the second round of evidence, proposing the introduction of part time student loans but with grant provision for students on low incomes.

32.4 As previously reported, the College’s fundable student numbers return for 2008-09 indicated a shortfall against the HEFCE contract target, for which provision of £500K had been made in the accounts.

32.5 The increased levels of recruitment in 2009-10 had brought numbers half way towards the additional student numbers (ASN) target following the award of ASNs in July 2009 as part of the College’s Strategic Development Fund bid.

32.6 2010-11 and 2011-12 would be critical years for recruitment. The School strategic plans and College strategies for student recruitment enrolment and induction were responding to this.

32.7 As part of HEFCE’s sector-wide exercise to fine institutions for over-recruiting full time undergraduates in 2009-10. Birkbeck had been fined c£200K for recruiting graduate diploma students onto one-year intensive programmes. The College had been advised to return such students in future as part time but with a full time equivalence of one and would be appealing against the fine.

33.1 An update on anticipated HEFCE funding for 2010-11. (G 2009 20)

33.2 The College had received details of its provisional HEFCE recurrent grant allocation for 2010-11. The grant had decreased by £250k (0.7%), substantially less than the £1.2m reduction assumed in the five year financial forecasts previously reported. Governors heard that this should reduce the forecast deficit for 2010-11. The final allocation would be confirmed in July 2010.

33.3 Research income had increased by 2.1% following the good RAE outcome. Teaching income had reduced by 5.2% reflecting phased withdrawal of ELQ transitional funding and reduction in the allocation for postgraduate taught programmes in library and classroom based subjects.

33.4 A total of 569 ASNs, equivalent to £1,817k, was included in the teaching grant, providing Birkbeck with the opportunity to convert transitional ELQ safety net funding into permanent recurrent funding. The 2010-11 contract targets were:
   - Baseline 4,263FTEs.
   - To retain 2009-10 ASN funding: 4,596FTEs
   - To retain 2010-11 ASN funding: 5,165FTEs

33.5 Governors were pleased to note that the outcome was better than predicted. They noted, however, that the grant included £723K moderation funding for one year only, a figure similar to the projected loss of income from postgraduate taught programmes in
library and classroom based subjects. The College would need to identify means to recoup this loss for 2011-12, by increasing the tuition fees for these programmes.

33.6 Governors also noted that 2011-12 would be a particularly critical year for the College when, without moderation or safety net funding, it would be imperative to recruit additional student numbers and secure increased fee income. It was reported that the College, in consultation with the Audit Committee, was developing a financial scenario model to assess the impact of variations in fee, funding, student numbers and cost inflation.

33.7 Governors asked whether there had been any developments on capital funding allocations and heard that, while cuts were expected, their magnitude had not been confirmed. As Birkbeck had already brought forward and committed its 2008-11 Capital Infrastructure Framework funding, it was not anticipating clawback from already allocated funds.

34 STRATEGIC REVIEW
Received:
34.1 A progress report on the Strategic Review. (G 2009 21)

Noted:
34.2 Governors noted that, as the Strategic Review responded primarily to changes in teaching funding, the report did not mention research or research infrastructure. It was noted that, as research income made up a substantial part of the HEFCE grant, appropriate strategic consideration should be given to research.

34.3 The developing School strategic plans focused on development of research as well as learning and teaching. A College level research strategy was also under development.

34.4 The student Governors asked what input the students would have in agreeing College strategies such as research and retention strategies. It was confirmed that these documents were considered by committees with student members.

34.5 The College aspired to build a large lecture theatre, but funding had not been identified. Given the central London location, there were also limited available sites for building. The issue would be kept under review and revisited once the next round of capital allocation had been made.

35 BIRKBECK STRATFORD
Considered:
35.1 An update on progress in the Stratford initiative. (G 2009 22)

Noted:
35.2 The plan was to complete the new building in time for the 2013-14 academic year. It would be called Stratford Island University Centre and the space would be split 1:2 between Birkbeck and UEL.

35.3 The building project would be managed jointly through a joint management group, project board and finance committee with equal membership from Birkbeck and UEL. Both Heads of Institution would be on the management group. Major decisions would continue to be referred for approval via Birkbeck and UEL’s governance structures and governing bodies.

35.4 Birkbeck Stratford was not considered as a second campus but as an integral part of the College. The new building would provide Stratford students currently being taught in rented premises with better facilities. Although the building would not provide dedicated
 research facilities, it would be possible to establish research links focusing on areas relevant to East London, such as the existing collaboration with the Raphael Samuel History Centre.

35.5 Governors noted the ongoing need to raise awareness about Stratford plans and activities among staff, students and the Stratford community.

36 HEALTH AND SAFETY
Considered:
36.1 The Annual Report of the Safety Committee. (G 2009 23)

Noted:
36.2 Governors asked about the extent of the College’s provision for workplace related stress. It was reported that initiatives were in place including literature giving guidance on managing stress and workshops for staff; but that few actual cases of stress had been reported.

36.3 An incident involving non compliance with the College’s chemical hazards regulations had arisen during the year. Governors heard that improvements to the management and risk assessment of this area had resolved the underlying issues.

36.4 In response to a question about the risk of under-reporting Health and Safety incidents, Governors were assured that there was a network of Health and Safety representatives in the College, all embedded in their local departments and well briefed about their duties; and that the Health And Safety Officer maintained a close overview.

37 GOVERNORS’ LIAISON SCHEME
Received:
37.1 An update on the Governors’ Liaison Scheme. (G 2009 24)

Noted:
37.2 Governors’ had been assigned to and were liaising with each of the new Schools. A further report would be made in the autumn term.

38 AUDIT COMMITTEE
Received:
38.1 The Report of the Audit Committee. (G 2009 25)

Noted:
38.2 Audit Committee had commissioned an audit of the financial management of the Students’ Union following concern raised over authorisation of expenses claims and non submission of audited accounts by the due date. A further report would be made to the next meeting.

38.3 Audit Committee forwarded its termly assessment of performance indicators in relation to the top risks faced by the College. Governors noted that the full top risk register, recording risk, likelihood impact and owner, would be considered in the summer term.

39 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Received
39.1 The Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. (G 2009 26)

Budget Estimates 2009-10

Noted:
39.2 The projected deficit was now just over £1M, compared with £1.8M forecast in the first estimates. Factors included increased tuition fee income, indicating that the strategy to raise fees to address financial difficulties was beginning to be effective. The increased income was mainly from international student fees.

39.3 The operating position had also been improved by release of £700K of the HEFCE Strategic Development Fund (SDF) award into the budget. Strategic Review spend was being charged against both College and SDF award funds in line with the partnership approach for resourcing the College’s transformation agreed with the funding council.

39.4 F&GPC had confirmed that the pattern of income and expenditure during the year was following the established and expected pattern. The forecast outturn did not take the impact of investment gains and losses into account; the impact of investments would be assessed at the end of the financial year.

Income Distribution Model budget

Noted:
39.5 F&GPC reported its endorsement of the revised Income Distribution Model (IDM) for 2009-10. The pattern of surplus and deficit was as previously reported with Science, Business and Law in surplus and Arts and Social Sciences in deficit.

39.6 2009-10 had been a transitional year in budgetary terms in which the income and expenditure in the Income IDM was determined before Schools made their strategic plans. The IDM and College budget estimates for 2010-11 would be based on School and professional services plans. The Chair of F&GPC had agreed to review the estimates with the Master and Director of Finance before their submission in the summer term.

39.7 F&GPC also considered draft documentation on the principles of income distribution and financial responsibilities within the College, noting the need for clear financial regulation to provide the context for planning and development.

Fees, Scholarships and Bursaries

Considered and approved:
39.8 Revised tuition fees for ELQ students for 2010-11, as recommended by SPC and F&GPC

Noted:
39.11 The revisions were a 25% ELQ premium for undergraduate programmes, a 30% ELQ premium for Certificate of HE modules and a 10% ELQ premium for postgraduate taught programmes in science, computer science, geography, archaeology and mathematics. The risk associated with raising fees was being offset by an enhanced undergraduate bursary scheme and close monitoring of recruitment.

Energy and Environmental Management

Considered and approved:
39.12 The College’s Carbon Reduction Strategy with targets against a 2006 baseline of 15% reduction by 2012, 50% by 2020 and carbon neutrality by 2050.

Noted:
39.13 HEFCE’s proposed criteria for the next round of Capital Infrastructure Framework (CIF) funding would be linked to estate condition and environmental criteria. Birkbeck was working with other Bloomsbury Colleges on shared energy and environmental management posts.
39.14 Governors were pleased to note that the College had secured a £500K interest free loan funding from Salix (a company funded by the Carbon Trust which supports public sector carbon reduction initiatives).

**Russell Square**

**Noted:**

39.15 Birkbeck and the Wiener Library were in the final stages of confirming the lease agreement for the Wiener’s accommodation at 29 Russell Square.

39.16 Options were being evaluated for the refurbishment of the other Russell Square houses. Planning permission had been secured for renovation at 27/28 and the College was working on a planning application for more extensive work in 25/26. F&GPC reported that the outcome of these discussions may lead to a revision of the capital programme budget agreed last term, but any variation would be within the overall envelope of £16M.

**HR Strategy and Policy Committee**

**Considered and Approved:**

39.19 **HR Policies:**
- **Redundancy Policy**, subject to minor amendments.
- **Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy**, subject to minor amendments.
- **Grievance Policy**;
- **Retirement Policy**.

**40 ACADEMIC BOARD**

**Received:**

40.1 The Report of the Academic Board. *(G 2009 27)*

**Noted:**

40.2 Academic Board had approved the Institutional Audit Briefing document which would be submitted to the QAA and would be a critical part of the audit process. The briefing visit would take place on 4-6 May and the audit visit on 7-11 June. The outcome, if positive, would lead to resumption of the College’s application for degree awarding powers.

**Note:** Following the conclusion of the institutional audit, the QAA has written to the College to confirm its confidence in Birkbeck’s ability to maintain academic standards and quality.

**Noted:**

40.3 Academic Board had approved a revised procedure for appeals against decisions of Boards of Examiners, subject amendments made at the request of the Students’ Union. These were being redrafted and would be forwarded to the Students’ Union.

**Approved:**

40.4 **Conferment of the title of Emeritus Professor on the following staff who had recently retired:**
- **Professor Avtar Brah**, Professor of Sociology in the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy;
- **Professor Graham Goldsworthy**, Professor of Biological Sciences in the School of Science;
- **Professor Elizabeth Hounsell**, Professor of Biological Sciences in the School of Science.
41 **EQUALITIES COMMITTEE**

Received:
41.1 The report of the Equalities Committee. *(G 2009 28)*

Noted:
41.2 This was the first report of this new Committee whose remit extended to staff and student equality and diversity matters. Governors were pleased to note the range of activities under way.

Approved:
41.2 The annual Equality and Diversity Report.

42 **AUDIT COMMITTEE: CO-OPTED MEMBER**

Noted:
42.1 Governors had approved, by email resolution dated 21 February 2010, the appointment of Ms Julia Collins as a co-opted expert member of the Audit Committee for a term of office starting on 1 March 2010 and expiring on 30 September 2012.

42 **EXAMINATION TIMETABLES**

Noted:
42.1 The Student Governors gave feedback on the timing of release of examination timetables and the need for working students to be given as much notice as possible. The College gave a commitment to address this matter for the next session.

43 **APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**

Noted:
43.1 The appointment of a new Chair of Governors was taking longer than the initial plan. It was necessary to take time to identify and have meaningful discussions with the right candidate. In the interim, Lord Marshall had agreed to stay on as Chair and Garth Pollard had agreed to chair meetings as needed.

43.2 The Master thanked Lord Marshall and Mr Pollard on behalf of the College for their invaluable assistance in ensuring continuity in the chairing of Governors and in identifying a new Chair.

44 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

Resolved:
44.1 To grant authority to affix the Common Seal of the College to any deeds or documents necessary to give effect to the resolutions of the Governing Body at this meeting.

45 **MEETING DATES**

Noted:
45.1 The date of the summer term meeting:
- Monday 1 July 2010 at 5.15 p.m.

Signed………………………………………………

Date ……………………………………………