

## **MINUTES OF THE SEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2011**

### Members Present:

Carol Stone (Chair), Joe Backshell, Rob Harman (Co-opted Member), Andrew Miller, Adrian Moore, Philip Richmond.

### Also present:

Rob Beale, Chair of Governors  
Alasdair MacDonald, Clerk to the Governors

### **The meeting commenced at 1600hrs.**

#### 01/11 APOLOGIES

All members were in attendance. The committee chair welcomed Rob Beale to the meeting.

#### 02/11 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No interests were declared by members in any items on the agenda.

#### 03/11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 DECEMBER 2010

Document No 11/02 refers. The minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the committee chair.

#### 04/11 MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS REQUESTED

The committee chair confirmed that Peter Wells had been appointed to the Governing Body with effect from 14 December 2010.

#### 05/11 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Document 11/03 refers. Carol Stone informed the committee that Joe Backshell had decided not to seek a further term of office and that a governor vacancy would arise, therefore, from 26 February 2011. She stated that this agenda item had three primary aims:

- To discuss the skills and experience most needed by the Board to fill the pending vacancy
- To agree an appropriate search strategy
- To discuss further the vacancy which would arise for a chair of governors when Rob Beale stood down after the next full Ofsted inspection.

The clerk guided members through the contents of the Membership Report. He had included the findings of the last Skills Audit (albeit this was in the process of being updated) and included a table showing the Board's present diversity profile. He reminded the committee that it had conducted a full review of its search strategies in 2009/10 making considerable use of relevant reports by The 157 Group, LSIS, and the College's internal auditors. A number of actions had followed this review but as the Board, on the Search Committee's advice, had successfully filled its vacancies in 2009/10 and 2010/11 to date, a full recruitment campaign had not been undertaken. However, the clerk reported that this could be initiated at fairly short notice.

He directed members' attention to Annex A to Document No 11/03, which suggested what the composition of an 'ideal' Board might be.

The committee chair asked the chair of governors if he would like to suggest to the committee the essential skills, experience and knowledge to look for in its search for a new governor. He identified 3 core skills sets:

- Strategic thinking
- Performance monitoring
- Talent identification in the recruitment of the College Principal and other senior post holders.

For the role of chair of governors, he also highlighted the importance of building an effective working relationship with the Principal and the Clerk. The chair needed to be robust in thought and action, able to act as a 'critical friend', and passionate about education and training.

The committee discussed whether a chair of governors should be an internal or an external appointee. Members agreed with the present chair of governors that it would be difficult to 'parachute' someone in without prior knowledge of the College and of fellow governors. He confirmed that it demanded a lot of time and effort. Also, he suggested that the role he had performed in seeking to lead a transformation of the College would be different to his successor's where the priority would be to cement the College's improvement and move on towards a Grade 1 college. The Principal stated that his preference would be to work with an existing Board member in the role of chair.

The clerk reminded the committee that its advice on the appointment of a new chair of governors would be most helpful to the Board when the time came, but the Search Committee was not required to nominate a candidate. This was a process that the clerk would lead at a Board meeting. However, it might be considered good practice for a chair designate to be identified to 'shadow' the present incumbent. Also, it was standard practice to sound individuals out about their desire and capacity to undertake this role. The present chair confirmed that he would not leave immediately after an Ofsted inspection unless a replacement was already in place.

The committee asked the clerk to draw up a job description and person specification for the role of chair of governors which, when approved, could be circulated to Board members.

Action: JAM

The committee chair asked members to turn their attention now to the selection of a new governor to fill the pending vacancy. She suggested that, taking account of the skills set suggested by the chair, as well as the previous agreement of the committee that the present Board was light in senior executives from industry or public service organisations, seeking a candidate who had the capacity to fill the role of chair in due course might be desirable.

The committee discussed some individual candidates by name, their appropriateness, likely interest and availability. Rob Harman agreed to talk to one person whose profile fitted the committee's stated requirements.

Action: RH

The Principal agreed to contact a previous governor for whom a conflict of interest, which had led him to stand down, had now been resolved.

Action: AM

The Vice Chair of Governors reminded members that the committee had previously identified the desirability of a senior industrialist, someone with Marketing expertise, and also a senior local councillor. He identified the Research Councils, the Defence Academy at Shrivenham, and Bank Managers as potential targets. He also advocated the role of a committee co-optee as an excellent training ground for future governors. The committee agreed that having a 'reserve' list was desirable.

The chair of governors agreed that search efforts must continue but cautioned against selected someone just because there was a vacancy: it was vital to select only those who fully met the Board's requirements. Ironically, the College's chances of attracting the right person were likely to improve after a successful Ofsted inspection, he believed, whilst recognising that the College's reputation was steadily improving.

#### 06/11 GOVERNOR APPRAISAL

Document No 11/04 refers.

The committee agreed that this matter was no longer within its remit and would need to be referred directly to the Governing Body.

Action: JAM

#### 07/11 MEETING ASSESSMENT

Document No 11/05 refers. The clerk informed members that the meeting assessment form had been redesigned as requested by a meeting of the Chairs of Committees in September. Members completed their individual assessments of the meeting and returned them to the clerk. The meeting assessments showed an average score of 1.33.

The following written comments were made:

- To allow 1hr for this meeting was ambitious
- Positive outcomes: chair succession strategy; the recruitment brochure; identification of specific names to be approached; governor appointment strategy.

The committee chair thanked Joe Backshell for his excellent contribution to the Search Committee, to the Search and Governance Committee before that, and to the Governance Effectiveness Working Group which merged with the Search and Governance Committee. He would be missed.

#### 08/11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Search Committee will be held on 31 March 2011.

**The meeting concluded at 1705hrs.**