

**Minutes of the meeting of the South Bank Colleges Board
held at 4.00pm on Thursday, 23 February 2023
in Room 04.02/03, Vauxhall Campus, LSBTC**

Present

Ruth Farwell (Chair)
Andrew Owen (Vice Chair)
Steve Balmont
Sue Dare
Nigel Duckers
Jacqui Dyer
Mee Ling Ng
David Phoenix

Apologies

Moriam Folawiyo

In attendance

Michael Broadway
Richard Flatman
Romy Jones
Monica Marongiu
Fiona Morey
Jacqueline Mutibwa
Ian Rule
Wayne Wright

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed the trustees to the meeting.

The Chair noted that the Board had just had a tour of the new LSBTC building which would be open to students on 27 February 2023. The Chair noted that it was a momentous occasion and thanked all who had been involved in the project. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked staff for the work they were doing in preparation for the opening of the new College whilst also continuing with the usual business.

2. Declaration of Interests

No member declared an interest in any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes of the previous meetings

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2022 as an accurate record and their publication, as redacted.

4. Matters arising

The Board noted the update on matters arising from the previous meeting.

Estates health & safety audit outstanding actions

The Board received an update on the outstanding actions from historic estates health and safety audits. The Board received assurance from the Accounting Officer that the outstanding actions were being progressed and that a review of the oversight and control effectiveness would be undertaken. The management issues, including failures of oversight and accountability, had been addressed and included reviewing staff roles and responsibilities and providing training accredited by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH). A further update would be circulated to trustees in March 2023.

Contemplation room

The student union had a meeting with the estates manager and the student services manager on the matter concerning the room which the Muslim students can use for prayer. A suitable room had been identified at Clapham that would be converted into a quiet contemplation room and would be available to all students. Contemplation rooms were available at LSBTC and the Brixton site. There was a consistent approach across the college's three campuses.

5. Update from the Students' Union President

The student union (SU) President was unable to attend the meeting. An update on the recent activities undertaken by the SU would be circulated to trustees.

6. Update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Matters

The Board discussed the EDI operational action plan which would help address the EDI matters arising from the Self-Assessment Report and EDI working group meetings.

The Board noted the action on transgender awareness and training. An annual group EDI report would be considered by the Board in May 2023. The Board development session on EDI in July 2023 would provide trustees with an awareness training on transgender issues and SBC's approach.

The Committee noted that further work needed to be done on the action plan. An updated action plan with impact measures would be prepared at the end of the academic year 2022/23 and presented to the Board at the meeting in July 2023. An EDI KPIs framework and targets which would enable the Board to monitor performance in this area of work would be presented to the Board at its meeting in September 2023.

7. Board Effectiveness Review – Update on Action Plans

The Board reviewed the action plan put in place after the effectiveness review in 2021 and the updated action plan which would address the findings from the effectiveness review undertaken in 2022 and residual actions from the 2021 review.

The Board discussed:

- the outstanding actions in particular those concerning board engagement and visibility with staff and students and that the agreed activities needed to

be progressed. The College Leadership Team would consider ways to increase Board engagement with staff and students.

- the matter concerning how best to keep the Board updated outside the meetings which would be considered. An annual report on LSBU group matters was circulated to trustees annually.
- the role of the project working group. It was not a decision-making group and its purpose was to provide an opportunity to consider the significant projects in greater detail and give assurance to the Board.

The Board noted that 'completed actions' or those 'in operation' would be signed off and a review of progress against the current action plan presented to the Board at the end of the year.

8. Executive Principal's Report

The Board received updates on the performance of LSBTC and LGC.

On LSBTC performance, key risks included the contribution rate which was below target, recruitment targets for adults and apprenticeships had still not been met and attendance performance was lower than the same period last year. The developments at the College were noted.

On LGC performance, key risks included the contribution rate which was below target, attendance in English and Maths and risk to income on the AEB provision due to the low adult recruitment. The shortfall would be managed by providing alternative new and additional provision for adult learners together with marketing strategies that would mitigate the risk. The developments at the College were noted.

The Board discussed the key matters at SBC since the last meeting in November 2022.

The Board noted that student attendance remained a serious concern at both colleges, due to the risk to student achievement and financial sustainability. There was discussion about the challenges in addressing the matter. Modest improvements had been made since the last Board and Quality & Improvement Committee meetings despite implementing various strategies. The Board requested that the strategies were reviewed including the attendance strategy. The revised attendance strategy and an update on attendance performance and associated risks would be presented to the Quality & Improvement Committee meeting in June 2023 and recommendations made to the Board.

The importance of keeping students' contact details up to date for business continuity and disaster recovery plans was noted and the effectiveness of the current process considered.

The Board noted an update on 2022/23 recruitment. 16-19 year olds (ESFA) current figures were positive and there was some improvement through in-year recruitment though the budget target had not been achieved to date. On adult provision the

budget target had not been achieved to date and there were plans to consider further sub-contracting to achieve the required numbers.

9. Accounting Officer's Report

The Board noted the key matters since its last meeting in November 2022.

The Board discussed:

- an update on the estates programme. Phase 1 NESC project (Block A) had been completed and would be open to students on 27 February 2023. A post-project review would be undertaken by BDO internal auditors which would support the next stages of the estates development (Phase 2 & 3) and address the lesson learned from the previous project. The audit report would be considered by the Audit Committee. A financial closure report summarising the financial performance of the project would be presented to SBC project working group and LSBU FPR Committee.
- an update on Phase 2 Blocks B and D. The design was being finalised so that the tendering process for the design and build could commence. The scheme would be redesigned due to the risk of rising project costs as a result of the current economic climate.

The Board noted an update on the ICT and infrastructure work which was progressing well.

The Board noted an update on the Office of National Statistics (ONS) reclassification of FE colleges as public sector. LSBU and SBC had been in discussion with DfE concerning the matter. A letter had been sent to DfE regarding the argument against implementing the change as SBC is a subsidiary of LSBU. DfE's response on the matter was awaited.

10. Chief Financial Officer Report

The Board discussed SBC mid-year financial performance 2022/23.

The Board discussed:

- the year to date position at the end of December 2022 which showed an adverse variance of £149k against budget.
- the 2022/23 mid-year position. The full year forecast had been further updated since the last Board meeting in November 2022 where the forecasted year end operational deficit was £1.5m with an adverse variance to the 2022/23 budget of £535k. As at December 2022, the forecasted year end operating deficit was £1.368m bringing down the adverse variance to £376k. It was anticipated that closing the budget gap was achievable in the remainder of the year as in-year growth funding of £254k (for 16-18 delivery) would improve the position.
- the updated financial risk assessment. The key risks to delivering the revised forecast relate to the forecasted income from apprenticeships, internal delivery of AEB provision, loans funded provision due to the late opening of the LSBTC

and increased costs of occupying Nine Elms. There were also some savings in pay expenditure and those due to the extended delays to the opening of the Nine Elms campus i.e. forecast costs for utilities and business rates were reduced. There was the anticipated savings of £700k due to a change of ESFA lagged funding which would improve the position; formal notification was awaited.

- the partner support for the delivery of the AEB grant funding which would be sought in order to mitigate the risk of claw back to GLA, in case of failure to deliver sufficient in-house delivery of AEB. The contract approval for an AEB sub-contractor would be sought outside the formal meeting (electronic approval).

The Board noted the improvement in the 2022/23 mid-year budget position. SBC was expected to present a draft report to LSBU FP&R Committee demonstrating the current plan to meet the original budget (or better) by year end. The group CFO would give assurance to LSBU FPR Committee that significant improvements have been made and SBC was on track to achieve the budget. There was confidence that the budget can be delivered with sustained effort.

11. 2023/23 Curriculum Offer

The Board discussed the proposed 2023/24 curriculum offer which was developed to meet key stakeholders' needs and aligned with key policies and strategies. The comments of the Board were sought on the direction of travel.

The Board discussed:

- the vision of the estates development which was to provide a vocational and technical curriculum offer with career progression pathways. The curriculum offer had been developed through a three-year curriculum plan designed to support growth, development of new provision and deliver a sustainable financial model supported by the annual business planning and growth cycle. It was aligned to the estates strategy agreed by DfE, aligned with the LSBU Group and SBC strategic plan. The curriculum plan is necessarily dynamic to respond to changes of policy and recruitment patterns.
- the curriculum strategy which focussed on the growth of LSBTC offer including apprenticeships, T levels and Level 3-4 provision.
- the rolling out of the curriculum offer and how it would be phased. BTECs and T levels would be delivered simultaneously to ensure that there were opportunities for different learners. There was interest in ensuring progression pathways for different learners. The T Levels being offered and BTECs being maintained along with the T level guided learning hours and qualification aims would be presented in the updated report at the next meeting in May 2023.
- the concerns about managing the pace of change and ensuring there were staff with the experience to deliver T levels which might be different skills from those for BTECs. LSBTC did not want to miss out on T levels funding and opportunities. The risks were noted. The change management programme was progressing and staff were being supported with the CPD programme which included T levels.

- how the transition period would be managed i.e. introduction of T levels and phasing out BTECs. BTECs would be phased out between 2023/24 and 2025/26 as additional T Levels are introduced each year. T levels would only be delivered if the planned recruitment target was met. The long-term position on the offer would be based on the students' needs and success.
- the Clapham campus decant strategy and its impact on the Gateway offer due to the temporary accommodation for the next few years during the construction of the college. There was a risk concerning maintaining the quality standard of the course provision during the decanting. Questions were asked about how the temporary accommodation for the Gateway college and eventually the new Gateway College and blocks B & D provision would meet the curriculum and teaching requirements (equipment and facilities) for courses currently remaining at Clapham as well as future growth. The curriculum offer was driven by a strategic decision and not the decant strategy. The expected quality standard of curriculum delivery during decanting and the risks would be addressed in the contract schedule which would be considered and approved as part of London Realty contract.
- the strategic drivers and whether it was student choice or the need to meet government requirements and funding. The student demographic trend was informed by local labour market intelligence and trend analysis and market share analysis which was part of the curriculum planning.

The curriculum offer would be reviewed further in consultation with key stakeholders. The Local Skills Improvement Plan would publish the priority areas in March 2023.

The Board supported the direction of travel on the proposed curriculum offer and that further work would be done. The final report together with the Accountability Agreement to the ESFA would be presented to the Board for approval at the meeting in May 2023.

12. Tender for External Auditors – Verbal update

The Board was informed that KPMG, group external auditors had indicated that they had difficulty resourcing the audit and were unable to undertake the external audit for financial year 2022/23 (final year of the contract). An LSBU and SBC tender process to find replacement external auditors was underway. The Chair of the SBC Audit Committee and the SBC CFO would be involved in the tender and selection process. The appointment of an external auditor was planned for the end of April 2023 and would be an LSBU Board and an SBC Board decision.

13. Board Development Programme 2023

The Board noted the proposed development programme to be delivered in 2023.

14. Speak Up Policy

The Board noted the group speak up policy which had been reviewed by the SBC Audit Committee at its meeting on 1 February 2023 and no changes were recommended.

15. Report from Committees

The Board noted the report from Committee meetings held since the last meeting in November 2022.

16. Any other business

It was noted that reports would include a glossary of the acronyms used.

**Date of next meeting
4.00 pm on Thursday, 4 May 2023**

Confirmed as a true record

(Chair)

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