

**SKILLS WORKING PARTY OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE
GUILDHALL SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DRAMA**

Monday, 14 April 2014

**Minutes of the meeting of the Skills Working Party of the Board of Governors
of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama held at the Guildhall EC2 at
1.45pm**

Present

Members:

Alderman David Graves (Chairman)
Deputy John Bennett (Deputy Chairman)
Sir Andrew Burns
Christina Coker

Professor Helena Gaunt
Professor Barry Ife
Peter Lisley

Officers:

Rakesh Hira

- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. MEMBERS DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the Skills Working Party meeting held on 14 February 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Online Governor Portal

The Principal reported that the implications and practicalities of creating an online portal for Governors was being considered alongside the reconfiguring of the website, which will follow the conclusion of the visual identity exercise.

Role of the Board

A Member initiated a discussion on the role/function of the Board. It was noted that the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) expected the Board to carry out its role in the same manner that any other Higher Education Institution would. In addition, the Board considers and is asked to approve key documents such as the Strategic Plan, the budget and in overseeing areas such as the Application for Taught Degree Awarding Powers and oversight of the Milton Court project. It was expected by HEFCE that the Board should act

as if it was autonomous and this was considered to be the appropriate mindset for Governors to adopt.

4. SKILLS AND EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2014

A report of the Town Clerk set out the results of the skills and effectiveness survey which was recently undertaken by the Board of Governors. The results demonstrated that overall Governors were satisfied with the administration of the Board and that the role of the Board was understood. The results also show that some Governors consider reports to the Board to contain relevant information but could be more concise in nature, the length of Board meetings could be shorter and that a separate Governor's portal could be made available online to provide Governors with access to relevant material i.e. the Strategic Plan and other key documents.

The results of the skills audit demonstrated that the Board was strong in areas of governance, strategic management and business planning and that Governors had an interest and knowledge of the arts. The survey identified a lack of skills among Governors with regard to fundraising and investments.

The review also highlighted that Governors have specific and relevant skills and knowledge for their role, such as Governors who sat on other educational governing bodies and some with qualifications in Education, Music, Stage Management and Theatre, which all served to strengthen the governance of the School.

A summary of actions on improving the governance of the Board and to inform the process for appointing future Governors was considered and agreed.

The Chairman indicated that while it might not be possible to implement all of the comments/suggestions arising from the survey of Governors, they should all be responded to so it is clear to the Board which suggestions are to be implemented and which may require further discussion/full Board approval.

A discussion took place with particular reference being made to the following points:

Research

It was agreed that an understanding of the School's mission and primary objectives particularly relating to 'research' would be better addressed and explained to Governors through a presentation at a future Board meeting.

Staff Views

It was noted that whilst the Board includes two staff representatives and one student representative, consideration would be given to carrying out a survey of staff opinions, it was suggested that this possibility could be canvased first with the staff Governors for their input.

Induction Process

The induction process for new Governors would be enhanced. New Governors would be invited to tour the School's premises and to meet the Chairman of the Board, the Principal and other members of the Senior Management Team through 1-1 meetings. In addition, guidance would be given regarding the essential reading within the bulky induction pack provided to new Governors and there would be an induction session for new Governors.

Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)

A note explaining the purpose of HEFCE and offering Governors further information on the expectations HEFCE had of the Board would be prepared and circulated.

Board meetings

In order to promote achieving the desirable position whereby Board meetings would not overrun beyond two hours, further thought will be given to the structure of the agenda and the balance between public and non-public items on the agenda. The Board would be invited to consider whether it would prefer to meet more frequently than quarterly, appreciating that there may be arguments both for and against.

Late Tabled Reports

It was explained that whilst every effort was made to avoid the late circulation of reports (and above all laying a report for decision upon the table at the start of a meeting), it was the 'least worst' option depending upon the circumstances. A Chairman can refuse to accept a late item onto the agenda.

Interaction with the School outside of meetings

Governors would be encouraged to attend more events/functions outside of meetings. It was appreciated that some Governors were regular attenders at performances by the students, but suspected that some have difficulty attending and that this might restrict their ability to understand the quality of the students' performances.

Governor Development Programme and Skills Audit

An internal training programme, led by staff within the School, would be prepared for new and current Governors. The training could be delivered at future Board meetings. Initial areas suggested for coverage included the development/funding office and how the research and quality systems functions operated.

International Strategy

It was noted that the School was progressing its international strategy.

RESOLVED – That:-

- (a) an abridged version of the skills and effectiveness review report be submitted to the Board.
- (b) the summary of actions, listed below, be progressed and taken forward accordingly:-

SKILLS AUDIT

- 1. The skills gaps identified from the skills audit of the Board be conveyed to the Nominations Committee in order to inform the appointment process with particular regard to areas such as fundraising, investments and public relations (**Action:** Town Clerk's Office).

INDUCTION PROCESS

- 2. The induction process include a training session to explain the role of the Board, its responsibilities and internal City Corporation governance procedures (**Action:** Principal/Town Clerks Office).
- 3. The induction process be enhanced for new Governors through 1-1 meetings with the School's management team and the Chairman of the Board when newly appointed to the Board (**Action:** Principal/Chairman/ Town Clerks Office).

ON-GOING GOVERNOR SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

- 4. An understanding of the School's mission and primary objectives relating to 'research' would be better addressed and explained to Governors (**Action:** Principal).
- 5. A secure area of the School's website be explored to include a portal for Governors which would contain relevant material to carry out their role i.e. strategic plans, induction material (**Action:** Principal)
- 6. An internal training programme, led by the School, would be put together for new and current Governors to provide on-going support for Governors (**Action:** Principal).
- 7. Governors would be offered training sessions in the form of presentations, at Board meetings, on development/funding and quality systems, along with others in the future (**Action:** Principal).
- 8. Governors will be emailed inviting them to suggest agenda items prior to Board meetings (**Action:** Town Clerks Office).

9. A briefing note on the School's staffing strategy would be circulated to Governors (**Action:** Principal).
10. A document outlining appointment timescales of Governors would be circulated to the Board (**Action:** Town Clerks Office).
11. Governors would be encouraged to attend more events/functions outside of meetings (**Action:** Principal/Chairman).

ROLE AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE BOARD

12. A note detailing the purpose of HEFCE and offering Governors further information on what the expectations HEFCE had of the Board would be circulated (**Action:** Principal).
13. The way the agenda was formulated and the timing of Board meetings would be given further thought to look at ways to avoid meetings continuing beyond two hours (**Action:** Principal/Town Clerk's Office/Chairman).
14. The Board would be asked if an additional Board meeting, per annum, would be desirable (**Action:** Chairman/All).
15. Staff views would be sought possibly through a staff survey or the staff representatives on the Board seeking views of staff at the School (**Action:** Principal).

CHAIRMAN

16. The Chairman to consider whether an annual "Away Day" take place, with the involvement of external practitioners, to understand and examine the School's strategy or other topical issues in greater detail (**Action:** Chairman/All).
17. The Chairman considers whether an annual Governor Appraisal process should be offered (**Action:** Chairman/Principal).

OFFICER FEEDBACK

18. Notify report authors of comments made by Governors requesting more concise and succinct reports and offer the option of attending in house report writing training sessions (**Action:** Town Clerks Office).

5. **QUESTIONS ON THE MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE WORKING PARTY**

There were no questions.

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 3.34pm

Chairman

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