

ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES

MINUTES of the AoC BOARD MEETING

Held on 9 December 2009 at AoC Board offices 2-5 Stedham Place, London WC1A 1HU

Present	Attendance (from 9/12/08)
John Bingham (Chair)	1/1
Tony Alderman	1/1
Richard Atkins	1/1
Pat Bacon	1/1
Sally Dicketts	1/1
Martin Doel	1/1
Peter Brophy	1/1
Ray Faulkner	1/1
Neil Hopkins	1/1
Tim Jackson	1/1
Asha Khemka	1/1
Mike Lee	1/1
Nick Lewis	1/1
Chris Morecroft	1/1
Robin Parkinson	1/1
George Trow	1/1
John Wilkinson	1/1
Andy Wilson	1/1

Apologies

Helen Pegg	0/1
John Widdowson	0/1

By Invitation

Lesley Davies
Julian Gravatt (item 8)
Rachel Sidgwick (item 9 only)

In attendance:

Debra Stych (Company Secretary)

1. WELCOME

John Bingham welcomed members to the new session. In particular he welcomed Willie Mills, who had been elected to the Board and Lesley Davies, who had recently

been appointed as AoC Director of Policy and Assistant Chief Executive following Maggie Scott's retirement from that post last summer.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CO-OPTIONS TO AoC BOARD

The AoC Chief Executive reported back on the recommendations from the Search Committee meeting on 18 November 2009. The Committee had been convened to consider the constituency of the Board following the most recent round of elections and to identify any interests which were not currently sufficiently represented. The Board agreed the following recommendations:

- Co-option of one sixth form college principal to replace Sue Lakemen, who had recently retired from the Board (possibly Kim Clifford)
- Co-option of two tertiary college principals to address the short fall of tertiary college representatives on the Board (possibly Di Roberts and Angela O'Donohue)
- Co-option of John Bingham to the AoC Board under paragraph 34(d) of the Articles of Association
- Each co-option would be for a three year period.

ACTION: JfB to contact individuals mentioned above regarding possible co-options

4. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED: That John Bingham was elected unopposed as Chair of the AoC Board

5. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR

Board members noted that the previous Deputy Chair, Nick Lewis, was due to retire from his college with effect from 31 December 2009 and would therefore be stepping down from his post as East Midlands representative on the AoC Board. John Bingham suggested that, in the light of this development, the election of Deputy Chair be deferred to the March meeting so that Board members could reflect on how best to fill this position.

RESOLVED: That the election of Deputy Chair be deferred to the next Board meeting

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Board meeting held on 23 September 2009 be approved

7. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising

8 POLICY UPDATE

Julian Gravatt attended for this item. Directors discussed recent policy issues:

- *Machinery of Government*

There was a discussion about MOG, including developments with the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The AoC Chief Executive informed Board members that consideration was being given to developing a traffic light system in relation to its views on local authority groups. It was noted that almost every member of the SFA's seven person management team is acting on an interim basis, pending decisions about permanent appointments and Board members discussed recent speculation about the appointment of the SFA Chief Executive.

There was a discussion about the position of sixth form colleges in relation to schools and college funding agency. AoC is considering issuing a questionnaire to sixth form college members to ascertain which funding agency they would prefer to be part of if there were no financial benefit to either option.

- Funding

The Board discussed a range of funding issues. Regarding 19+, the Skills Investment Strategy was now out, although it did not properly explain what will happen regarding the comparison of this year's and last year's funding budget. Martin Doel has written to Geoff Russell to seek clarification.

2010/11 will be a difficult year, coming on top of the chaos of how this and last year's funding was managed.

- Ofsted

There was reference to the new OFSTED inspection round which is causing problems for some colleges. The AoC Chief Executive suggested that the Skills Strategy provided an opportunity to question whether OFSTED was in fact the best vehicle to provide an inspection service of the sector.

- Capital Funding

AoC work in relation to capital funding continued and AoC has pressed Geoff Russell for action and financial support on the impact that capital deficits have on college/LSC relationships.

- Higher Education

There was reference to Higher Ambitions, which Board members agreed was a good document, providing a number of useful opportunities for FE.

- NEETS

There was a question about the experience of regional Board members in relation to NEETs following concerns by one Board member's college. Martin Doel pointed out

that AoC is preparing evidence in relation to the enquiry into NEETs and so would be consulting the membership about experiences in this area.

9. ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Rachel Sidgwick attended to present a report on preliminary feedback from the 2009 AoC Annual Conference. A comprehensive report would be presented to the March 2010 meeting when delegate responses had been received and figures reconciled. Anecdotal feedback, together with initial figures indicated that this had been another successful Conference and the Board extended their thanks and congratulations to AoC Management Services staff.

Board views were invited on the format and the content of the Conference and a number of points and observations were made:

- The “pocket guide” to the Conference had worked well and should be included in next year’s event
- The Student of the Year Award presentation had not worked so well and a proposal had been made at the AoC senior staff meeting the previous week that this presentation was sufficiently high profile to justify being incorporated into the programme for the Gala dinner.
- There was a suggestion that the Awards Ceremony in general was in need of a makeover in time for next year. Martin Doel informed Board members that he was likely to have a conversation with David Collins, LSIS, about an Awards Evening for the sector. Martin expected that he would bring back proposals on this issue to the Board in due course.

ACTION: MD

- Sixth form college presence at the event was better than in previous years, but there remained work to be done

10. ACCOUNTS

Peter Brophy presented the group management accounts to 30 September 2009. He explained that a number of deficits related to the loss of interest on deposits resulting from a change in investment strategy in response to perceived risks associated with the recent economic downturn. However, this decision had been reviewed at the last F&GP meeting, when the decision had been taken to chase better rates.

Peter also drew attention to costs associated with the CRM project which would amount to some £150,000 straggling two financial years. He reminded Board members that this would generate a deficit this year and possibly next. Martin Doel said that, whilst costs were significant, the acquisition of new CRM software was essential to bring the business forward. The AoC Chair confirmed that a full and professional procurement exercise had been undertaken by AoC to select the appropriate provider.

There was a question about the list of colleges which had not yet paid their AoC subscriptions. It was pointed out that the current presentation gave the impression that this was an exhaustive list of all non-members, which was not, in fact the case. Peter Brophy said that future reports would be clearer.

ACTION: PJB

11. SUPPORT FOR COLLEGE LEGAL ACTION

This was a confidential discussion, minuted separately.

12. MINUTES

Management Services

Received: Minutes from the AoC Management Services Board meeting on 27 October 2009

There was a suggestion that it would be useful to receive a presentation on the structure of AoCMS and the business plan and to receive ideas on rebranding at a future Board meeting.

ACTION: DS to schedule for future meeting

Employment Committee

Received: Minutes from the Employment Committee meeting on 13 October 2009.

The Board applauded the work of Nick Lewis in leading this Committee as Committee Chair and heading up pay negotiations.

13. Portfolio Groups

The Board received an update on progress with portfolio groups. Since the last meeting, Lesley Davies had been appointed as AoC Policy Director and Assistant Chief Executive. One of Lesley's principal tasks would be to co-ordinate the work of the various groups.

The Board agreed the establishment of a new portfolio group on Governance. This Group would work alongside the AoC Governors' Council and its remit would include governance, bureaucracy and regulation. It was agreed that the AoC Governors' Council would be consulted regarding the appropriate person to chair the Group.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Board was reminded that an election would take place early next year to elect the third President of the Association. The Board noted that the president role had worked well during the tenure of the first two presidents and agreed to publicise the elections in their respective regions. The new President's term of office will begin on 1 August 2010.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10 March 2010